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SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION;

OR,

GUARDIANS AND WARDS.

By ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

'THE BARONET'S FAMILY,' 'THE VALE OF THE TOWEY,' ETC. ETC.

"This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and is worth a monarchy.
I seek not to wax great by others' waning,
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy;
Sufficeth, that I have maintains my state,
And sends the poor well pleased from my gate."

Henry VI. Part II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION.

CHAPTER XVI.

"In one little body
Thou counterfeit'st a bark, a sea, a wind;
For still thy eyes, which I may call the sea,
Do ebb and flow with tears; the bark thy body is,
Sailing in this salt flood; the winds, thy sighs,
Who,—raging with thy tears, and they with them,—
Without a sudden calm, will overset
Thy tempest-tossed body."—*Romeo and Juliet.*

"JESSIE, go to him! do something,—say something, I entreat you!" said Anna, bursting into Jessie's room, and, as usual, casting her arms around her.

"What is the matter, Anna?" asked Jessie.

"I cannot stop to tell you now: he will be gone. I tried to do as you told me, and I am afraid I have gone too far. I have been rude, unkind, unjust—for how can he help his father? But go quick: be kind and gentle, and make up for my hardness of heart."

Jessie ran down to the parlour, and found Chat-

ham standing, hat in hand, as if uncertain whether to go or stay, and looking the very picture of despondency.

"Oh, Miss Burton, what can I do? I have offended your sister, and am wretched," he began, seizing Jessie's hand as if he were grasping something that must extricate him from his doubt and difficulty.

"She seems to think she has offended you," said Jessie quietly, "but she was so excited that I scarcely understand what the difference is between you."

"Can you spare me ten minutes, that I may explain what has passed since your sister left home?"

"Certainly." Jessie pointed to a chair, and seating herself on another, near Chatham, listened as composedly as she could to his communication.

He told her in the first place that he was in love with Anna, and wished to marry her. That he had broached the subject to his father, who opposed it vehemently. That he had requested an interview with Anna to declare his intentions, but was reduced by the wrath of his father to a mere statement of painful facts. That he had believed it right to state these facts to her, and that she had received his communication most indignantly,

giving him to understand, indirectly, that his father was his rival. She had acknowledged no affection for him, but had declared that she would never marry any one whose family were not proud to receive her amongst them. That he had entreated her to become engaged to him unknown to his father, and to wait until he was his own master, and could marry her in spite of opposition, but that she had refused.

"She did quite right," said Jessie steadily.

"I had hoped that you would have been my friend," said Chatham.

"Not in the way you imagine: I should neither be your friend nor my sister's, if I encouraged anything secret and clandestine. How are you to become your own master, if I may be allowed to ask so plain a question? Is it by the death of your father you look forward to being so?"

"Not exactly," said Chatham; "I have nothing at present independent of him; but on the death of my grandmother, my mother's only surviving parent, I come into possession of about four or five hundred a year."

"Perhaps if you were to become engaged to Anna, it might make you desirous of her death," said Jessie simply.

"God forbid! She is the kindest and best of women."

"Then do not put yourself in a position to desire it," said Jessie. "Have you no present means? I am sorry on your own account, that you should be wholly dependent on any one, it must so cripple your energies."

"I have nothing but my pay, and that, with my allowance from my father, barely suffices to keep my stud and servant."

Jessie was silent.

"Can you give me no hope, Miss Burton?"

"I fear not: Anna's happiness is too dear to me to allow me to give you any."

"What do you mean? Do you not think I should devote myself to making her happy?"

"I do not know; but that is not the question. She could not be happy as a wife unless she were one of her husband's family. She is proud."

"But my father would have placed her in the position of head of his establishment."

"That is the very reason that he will not admit her as such, being his son's wife. You, I am sure, feel confident that he would never forgive you if you were to marry her."

Chatham had nothing to say, and Jessie was silent awhile, thinking. At last she added—

"It is evidently impossible that you can marry my sister now. It is doubtful whether you may be ever able to do so. Elderly people frequently outlive young ones, and you may die before your grandmother. Moreover you may change: I have heard that soldiers are naturally given to change their loves with their quarters." Here Jessie blushed deeply, for she thought of Nelson. "Not that I have any reason to suppose that you will do so," seeing Chatham look angry. "The best and most proper thing to look forward to is the possibility of your father's relenting—"

"Never!" broke in Chatham, "I know him too well. He does not love me, or any one else but himself."

"Hush!" said Jessie, "a son should not lay bare his father's faults." Jessie had been so used to give advice and gentle lectures, that this hint slipped out unawares, and Chatham for the first time in his life took it patiently.

"May I see your sister again?" asked Chatham.

"Why? she would only show the proud side of her nature if she came again; and you had better take my assurance that she is sorry that she said anything to annoy you."

"Does she—do you think she does—"

"What?"

"Does she love another?"

"I do not think she does."

"I sometimes flattered myself that she preferred me; but then she has a way that no one else has, of winning everybody, and making each fancy himself the favoured one. Do you think she has any regard for me? does she——does she love me, in short?"

"If I knew, I would not tell you. That she has a certain preference for you, I have no doubt; but, like yourself, she is young, and I do not think very firmly settled in her opinions or attachments."

"Then she will not be constant to me, you think?"

"I think you are both likely to change."

"Miss Burton, I never saw any one so straightforward as you."

"Am I? I did not know it. I merely say to you what I think, because it is right. I hope I have not seemed rude or unkind: I did not mean to be so. I feel for you very much."

Here Jessie held out her hand, and Chatham impressed a very brotherly kiss upon it.

"Will you go to her once more, and tell her that I should like to part from her as a friend? I leave the day after tomorrow, and I know not when I may see her again—perhaps never."

Jessie left the room. She found Anna in the

large chair by the fire, her face buried in her hands on her lap, weeping bitterly. She delivered Chatham's message. Anna rose, hastily wiped her eyes, and said she would go to him. They descended together.

"Come in with me," said Anna, "I am not strong enough to resist anything that he may ask."

Chatham looked very much pained when he saw Anna's pale cheeks and tearful eyes.

"I have acted selfishly," he said; "forgive me! I ought not to have come here. I hope you are not displeased with me?"

Anna held out her hand, she could not speak.

"When you think of me," said Chatham, addressing both sisters, "if you ever do think of me, remember that I am almost alone in the world. With apparent splendour, property, friends, a father who is reckoned the patron of the arts and an encourager of talent, a brilliant position in the army, and some degree of reputation in society, still I am a lonely man: I have no one to love me."

Anna glanced into his eyes. Had he no one to love him? The answer was "Yes." He pressed her hand.

"But your grandmother, your aunt?" said the more matter-of-fact Jessie.

"My grandmother dotes on me, and my aunt, I believe, really loves me; but—"

"How many thousands are there in the world worse off than you!" said Jessie. "And oh! try to remember that we have all a Father in Heaven, who is more to us, if we seek Him, than father, mother, brother, and sister."

Jessie's solemn manner affected Chatham for a moment; but he was volatile, and, alas for him! not religious. He smiled slightly, and whispered—

"You do not say than 'wife.'"

Jessie shook her head, and sighed.

"Perhaps you may understand my words some day," she said.

Footsteps were heard in the court. In spite of his smile at Jessie's assurance of Divine aid, the last words that he spoke, as he bent over Anna's hand, were "God bless you!" How often are those solemn words used when the heart is firmly centred in some earthly object, and far removed from the Great Being whose name is on the lips!

Chatham rushed through the passage, and found his way out by the back-door. Anna hastened upstairs, and, throwing herself on her sister's bed, gave way to the most passionate grief. Had she suddenly lost the sister she loved best in the world, she could not have wept more bitterly than

she did at this separation from one whom she had known but a few weeks. This is folly; and against such folly the mind should brace itself as with bands of iron. Look to it, ye young women, who consider such partings as the one great grief of existence! and remember that you have no time given you to waste in the outpouring of such feelings. Your tears will be called for by-and-by, for lifelong separations from father, mother, brother, or sister,—perchance husband or child. Spare then your tears for death-beds, scenes of poverty and misery, or for the parting from the beloved of years. Spare them for time misspent, and unkind words and unholy thoughts; for be assured, sooner or later, they will flow for such things; but oh! waste not more than a few natural tears of regret upon passing fancies and worldly disappointments.

Jessie said with truth, that Anna had a sick headache, and thus accounted for her non-appearance that day. As soon as she was calm enough to talk, Jessie tried to reason her into the conviction that, as matters stood, it was better that the separation between her and Chatham should be final: but this she found impossible. Her one great hope still was, that as soon as he was independent of his father, he would marry her. She

entreated Jessie not to tell Pynsent or Aunt Betsey of her interview with Chatham, or its results.

"I think that would not only be unwise, but not quite right," said Jessie: "sooner or later it must come to their knowledge, and then they would justly accuse us of deceit and want of confidence. Never, my dear Anna, let there be any secrets in our family: we are left to our own judgment young; let us help one another. Every pleasure and pain that we share frankly, will serve to bind us more firmly together. As to poor Aunt Betsey, I own I shall dread to tell her about Mr. Michelson: still, truth must be told; and it may serve to put an end to the foolish hope that, I fear, she still has, of being yet married to him."

"I wish I were more like you, Jessie. I never know how to act in difficult matters, and am always following my own impulses."

"There is One above, dearest child, who will teach us to subdue our impulses, and to act with judgment and discretion, if we ask Him humbly."

"When I begin to teach in earnest, and to feel that others depend upon me, perhaps I shall be better," said Anna meekly.

"Let us pray that you may be kept from temp-

tation," said Jessie, the tears rushing to her eyes, as she looked on her beautiful sister's downcast face. After all, that is the simplest and most efficacious prayer. If we pray to God to remove the temptation, we need not fear to fall into it.

Jessie and Aunt Betsey were closeted together that evening till it was almost time to go to bed. Pynsent had returned, and questioned Louisa Colville upon the state of the household, but as she knew nothing positive, she was prudent enough to hazard no guesses. He proposed continuing certain instructions in chess that he had been giving her; and she, nothing loath, sat down to be schooled and politely scolded, and finally checkmated, by the somewhat dogmatic and very straightforward Pynsent. When they had played four successive games, and when Tiny, tired of watching them and collecting the men, had fallen asleep on the settle by the side of Charles, Pynsent grew fidgety, and asked Miss Colville to excuse him for a few minutes. He went upstairs, and hearing sounds in Aunt Betsey's room, he went thither. He stopped a moment, when something like a sob met his ear. He tapped at the door, and receiving no answer, and hearing a repetition of the sob, accompanied by Jessie's voice, he took the liberty of opening the door. He found Aunt Betsey apparently re-

covering from a fit of hysterics, and Jessie administering cold water and smelling-salts.

"What is the matter?" he began.

"Hush!" said Jessie, motioning him to the door; but he did not take the hint.

"Aunt Betsey," he said, "what is the matter? Are you ill?" and, in a professional way, he began to feel the pulse. "Hysteria, from some mental agitation. What can have happened to produce such a quickened pulsation?"

"My dear Pynsent!" sobbed Aunt Betsey. "That vile man! I call upon you to expiate—to—to—avenge my honour! That ungrateful girl—serpent—that I have nourished!"—

Here followed violent hysterics.

"Aunty! dear Aunty!" began Jessie, "she could not help it."

"Help what?" asked Pynsent.

"Mr. Michelson has proposed for Anna," whispered Jessie.

"The old fool!" was Pynsent's ungracious remark.

More hysterics.

"Go and get me some sal-volatile," said Pynsent to Jessie.

Jessie left the room.

"Now, Aunt Betsey," said Pynsent, very sternly

as to words, but with an irrepressible smile at the corner of his mouth, which gave an unusually comic expression to his features, "I will trouble you to be quiet. If you are not, I must have recourse to the only remedy in such cases, a good shaking."

"Oh, Pynsent! if you only knew!"

"I know very well that you are exposing yourself most ridiculously. A pretty example to set to your nieces! You, a woman of fifty!"—

"Forty—you know it is only just past forty!"

"Never mind, I thought it was sixty; but it is quite time you should give up such absurd notions. Mr. Michelson has never given a thought to you since you were three-and-twenty, as you may now see by—the old ass!—'there is no fool like an old fool'—by his falling in love with Anna."

"Ah! that is the dreadful part of it. She has been trying to supplant me; she has—she has used the most shameful arts!"

More hysterics.

Pynsent put himself into a pugilistic attitude.

"Aunt, I see I must shake you, it is the only cure," laying his hands on her.

"Don't—I won't—I will—you cannot understand these feelings. You have never loved."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Pynsent, laughing outright.

"Cruel, unfeeling boy!" said Aunt Betsey, shedding, for the first time, a few tears.

"Now, my good Aunt Betsey," said Pynsent, slightly softening, "pray put an end to this nonsense! Just reflect—at your advanced age!"

"What do you mean, Sir?" (No woman ever can bear an appeal to her age until she is a hundred, when she gets proud of it as a singularity.)

"That at your age you should be thinking of another world."

Here Jessie appeared with the sal-volatile.

"Miss Colville is waiting for you, Jessie, and wondering what in the world has happened to disarrange our evening. If you will go to her, I think I can cure Aunt Betsey."

Jessie lingered, but Pynsent looked so resolved that she at last followed his direction; Aunt Betsey continued to sob, and rock herself to and fro.

"Now, my dear Aunt Betsey," said Pynsent, seating himself leisurely by the side of his patient, "having got over the actual hysterics, it will be necessary to master the rest of your complaint. You must at once cease this sobbing, or I would not answer for the consequences; the swelling and redness of eyes and cheeks, as well as the extension of mouth, caused by hysterics, have been known to remain, and disfigure a person for life."

"What do you mean, Pynsent?" said Aunt Betsey, starting up from her chair, and rushing towards a glass.

She certainly would not have liked to have been, all her days, the object she saw before her. Her passion for her own beauty was greater than for Mr. Michelson. Pale and red alternated, and here and there was a streak of a mixed shade, where the rouge had rubbed off. The portion of beautiful false black hair that was mingled with the equally beautiful real, had come undone, and was visible in its true light. Her eyes and cheeks were swollen, and she looked altogether quite unlike the handsome Miss Betsey Burton she usually saw herself to be.

"Pynsent," she said, "I am better now, and should feel obliged by your quitting my apartment." (She always called her bedroom her apartment.)

"Certainly, Aunt, if you will give me one promise first, and that is, not to make this foolish affair further known; and not to allow Anna to fancy you are angry with her, for she could not help it."

"As to Anna, I will never speak to the ungrateful girl again." Here a slight sob began.

"For goodness' sake take care, Aunt. I really

feel alarmed already for your handsome face; use rose-water and remedies directly, or—"

"When you leave my apartment, Sir."

"But Anna, Aunt; I positively cannot go away without a promise: she must not be persecuted for what she could not help. Only fancy what your own state of mind would have been in the time of your youth and charms."

"Pynsent, you take liberties that I cannot permit."

"I beg your pardon: I only mean that if you had been scolded for all the lovers you were so cruel as to reject, you could never have survived even to your present age, much less to that we fervently hope to see you arrive at."

Aunt Betsey never knew when Pynsent was joking and when he was serious; now, she fancied he was joking, and reproached him accordingly.

"It is very wrong of you to jest about the time I may live, Nephew; as if you did not care how long or how short it was."

"I assure you, Aunty, I never felt less inclined to jest in my life. You know we all love you dearly, only we wish you to give up that horrible man—don't mention him—I won't, and to content yourself with your devoted nephews and nieces; unless, indeed, you should relent, and think of Uncle James."

"My dear Pynsent," said Aunt Betsey, struggling between another sob for the first-named lover and a smile for the second, "you talk quite absurdly: will you leave my apartment? it is very late, and I feel overcome."

"But Anna?" persisted the pertinacious Pynsent.

"I shall say nothing to her, do not be afraid; she is beneath my contempt."

"Good night, Aunty; cheer up; forget the—hem—we won't mention him. There give your unworthy nephew a kiss; you know I did not make myself, so I cannot help not being like the Burtons."

"Poor boy! no: a pity, but we have not all the same aristocratic natures; good night. Stop, Pynsent—what application would you recommend for my face? I do think it *is* swollen."

"Dreadfully, Aunt! Cold cream, rose-water, weak brandy-and-water."

"Vulgar! I hate brandy."

"But medicinally, Aunty: numbers use it medicinally, who would scorn it as a beverage—even the teetotallers, you know; I understand that quite fine ladies, looking upon it in that light, bring themselves to drink it quite easily. Nasty, of course, but so is all medicine. Good night."

Here Pynsent shut the door, and soliloquized in the passage.

"I may as well have it over at once, and go and congratulate Anna on her conquest."

He tapped at Jessie's bedroom door.

"Where is Anna? is she here? may I see her?"

"She is in bed, and not well," said Jessie.

"Then I must prescribe for her," entering the room unceremoniously.

"So you have had your first proposal, Anna. What did he say to you? Tell me, if you please, or I shall not sleep tonight: I am thinking of making one myself. What, crying! and under such auspicious circumstances! Michelson Hall, and ten thousand a year!"

"Dear Pynsent, you do not know all," whispered Jessie.

"Tell him—never mind me," said Anna.

Forthwith Jessie related the events of the day; when she had concluded, Pynsent went up to Anna's bedside, and gave her a very hearty brotherly kiss, which made Anna's tears flow again.

"Never mind, little beauty; 'all's well that ends well,' and how do we know that all may not end well yet? Meanwhile let us try to forget the name of Michelson, and return to good old Fairfield times and ways; I think you must give up Wales."

"Oh no! impossible!" exclaimed Anna, sitting up in bed, and feeling as if her brother were wrenching out her last hope.

"Do you know, Anna, if you have really fallen in love, you have committed the greatest folly of which human nature is capable; it unfits one for everything else, and makes the wisest men noodles. I never mean to fall in love: no, upon my honour."

"Then it is very obstinate and unkind of you," said Anna, suddenly brightening up, and taking Pynsent's hand energetically; "you know I set my heart on your falling in love with dear Louisa Colville. I was sure you would at first sight, and if you do not before she goes, I shall think you no better than a stone."

"Bravo, Anna! Do you think me at all suited for a Miss Primmerton's young lady,—pretty, sentimental, accomplished, fine, and an heiress to boot,—I, a poor country apothecary with nothing a year?"

"You are my brother, and she is my friend."

"Most excellent reasons both; but, between ourselves, Miss Colville is not exactly to my taste: she is very pretty, certainly, but she is too romantic. I hate sentimental school-girls, that talk of the affections, and never have any real ones; that fall in love at first sight, and yet don't know what love means."

"I am sure Louisa is not one of them; she never thinks of such things. But you are so vain that I am certain, at heart, you think nobody good enough for you."

"You are quite right, most learned sister. I have a vast deal to do before I think of losing my intellects. I shall want them to make a fortune with, first; and then I may be able to afford to let them run wild—by which time, I fear your friend Louisa will be Mrs. General or Colonel Somebody, in the far East."

"You are not barely civil to her."

"I have been teaching her chess for two mortal hours, and actually was polite enough to let her win a game."

"At all events she is a match for you in repartee."

"Well, she does let out some quaint, dry, good things now and then, that sound very original."

"You should see some of her poetry."

"Now you have gone too far; a poetical young lady! the greatest horror in existence! Do you mean to say she writes poetry? I will fly her society."

"Then you will punish yourself, I am sure," here interposed Jessie laughing, "for when once you get to know her, Louisa is the most agreeable

companion I ever met with. You see so little of her, that she is not half at home with you yet: and I think you make her nervous, because you are naturally satirical."

"I should say she was satirical," said Pynsent.

"No, she is only droll: she says quaint, but not unkind things."

"Well, at all events, I am not in love with her, which was, I believe, the beginning of Anna's pathetic appeal; and we are turning night into day, and I came here to congratulate Anna on her first proposal, and now I congratulate her on an escape."

"I thought you liked Captain Michelson," said Anna hastily.

"So I do, as a gentlemanly, kind-hearted fellow, but he might not make a good husband for all that; we will not discuss him now, however; so give me a kiss, and be a good girl, and don't cry. Good night, and God bless you both."

CHAPTER XVII.

"She is a strange and wayward child,
That Elsie of ours. She looks so old,
And thoughts and fancies weird and wild
Seem of late to have taken hold
Of her heart that was once so docile and mild!"

LONGFELLOW.

We must pass over somewhat hastily the events of the next few weeks. Aunt Betsey did not make her appearance amongst the family party for two or three days, and saw only Jessie, who confided to Pynsent, between smiles and tears, that she had procured a large bottle of rose-water, a small one of brandy, which was labelled "cordial," and some *eau de Cologne*, all of which she applied from time to time to her face. When she did come downstairs again she was very stiff and formal, but perfectly civil to Anna, who, after making a few efforts to get into her good graces again, became careless and distant in turn. Anna did her best to appear cheerful, and when Uncle James or Captain Burford rallied her upon having left her heart at Mans-

ford Park, she tried to laugh at their joke, and to seem as merry as ever.

Mr. Michelson lost his election, and, disgusted with the county, the Hall, Fairfield, and everything that he had met with during his stay in Somersetshire, fled again to his dear Italy. Chatham returned to his regiment, on no very affectionate terms with his father, and determined to circumvent him if he could.

Nelson made his appearance at Fairfield one evening, to take leave before his departure for the North. He had put on his coat of mail, and was rigidly careful of his feelings during the few hours he spent with the oldest and dearest friends he had in the world,—friends whom he really and sincerely loved. He saw at a glance that a change had taken place in Anna, and that, although friendly as ever, she had ceased even to try to attract him; a weakness of which she had decidedly been guilty before. Jessie was sweet and gentle as ever, but somewhat less cheerful; he did not like to inquire why, but he thought because Anna was so soon to leave them. Captain Burford insisted on a rubber, and as Pynsent was engaged to play chess with Miss Colville, and Anna hated cards, he and Jessie were obliged to make it up, and were thrown together as partners, owing to

Captain Burford's declaring—we will not stop to inquire why—that he would not play with Jessie because she always would forget his lead. If Nelson and Jessie's eyes met, and they both coloured, it was from different causes. Nelson was thinking of Anna; Jessie of him; and neither of them of the game.

Pynsent and Louisa were seated at a small round table in the opposite corner, and occasionally sending forth a volley of offensive small shot in the way of jests and repartee, which Pynsent liked better than the chess, although he was a good player, and Louisa was improving.

"Check to your king! oh, no such thing!" said Pynsent.

"Poetical!" said Louisa.

"By the bye," maliciously began Pynsent, "I hear you write poetry?"

Louisa darted a glance at Anna, who sat, unconscious of what was passing, working.

"Oh yes," said she coldly, "I am thinking of publishing; shall I dedicate my book to you?"

Pynsent did not expect this kind of rejoinder. "I should like to see it first," he said.

"Just put your king out of check before I go and fetch it," said Louisa.

"That is taking an unfair advantage of the in-

terest I was showing in your literary fame," said Pynsent. "I declare I am in a mess."

Louisa rubbed her hands, whilst Pynsent sat for nearly ten minutes considering a move.

"Why, Miss Colville, what have you done to Pynsent?" said Captain Burford, looking over his shoulder, "he seems in a brown study. I hope you have checkmated him: I am sure that is just how he would look if he were about to be mated for life."

"Is it?" said Louisa, looking at Pynsent and laughing.

"Go on," said Pynsent, "you had something more upon your tongue."

"Only that it would not be a very cheerful prospect," interposed Nelson; "I suppose mating for life never is."

"Was that what you were going to say, Miss Colville?" said Pynsent. "Young ladies are not often so cynical."

Louisa blushed.

"Will you go on with your game, and let us alone?" continued Pynsent; "you have quite put my intended move out of my head."

He thought again, and finally moved.

"Checkmate!" cried Louisa; "you did not see that. Now do not say that you gave me the game; it was very fairly won."

"A perfect oversight," cried Pynsent, much annoyed, "I am sure I can get out of check;" and he moved his king backwards and forwards, into every possible square, but was finally obliged to allow himself to be mated.

"Will you have your revenge?" said Louisa maliciously: "I know you do not like to be fairly beaten by a lady."

"I am afraid you must defer it till tomorrow," interrupted Jessie, "so you may go to bed conqueror for once, Louisa. I declare Pynsent looks quite crest-fallen."

"Why, you must own it *is* annoying to have such a checkmate as that. Just look! I ought to have moved so, and then the mate I was preparing must have happened in five or six moves."

"There are some people who never will allow themselves to be beaten," said the Captain: "it is rather a good determination in the long-run. 'Never say die;' there is a great comfort in feeling that you have the best of it, whatever the world may think."

"You are very silent tonight, Miss Anna," said Nelson, moving towards that young lady, in spite of his resolutions to the contrary.

"Am I?" said Anna, starting from her reverie.

"I am going away tomorrow, and shall not see

you again before you leave for Wales," said Nelson.

"I shall have holidays in the summer; you will be back by that time. I shall see you before you go to India," replied Anna.

"I deserve this cool answer," thought Nelson as he sat down on the settle by the side of Charles and Tiny, who had been engaged in alternately reading and drawing whilst the games were going on.

"Will you go to India with me, little Missy?" he said, stroking Tiny's soft hair; "I will get you such a nice little husband."

"I would rather not, thank you," said Tiny. "But you are not going to India, for a long time."

"It is impossible to say how soon."

"What new crank now?" screamed the Captain; "by Jove, Sir, you are quite incomprehensible."

"He does not mean it, Captain Burford," said Charles, "he is only alarming us a little."

Nelson looked at Anna, who appeared to take no kind of interest in the matter.

"What's come to the young people?" said the Captain to Aunt Betsey. "Do you know what makes Anna so silent, Miss Burton? Is she in love?"

"I cannot say," said Aunt Betsey primly.

The Captain stared. "Well! it's an odd world, but 'twill be all the same a hundred years hence,' I dare say:" and he solaced himself with his pipe.

When the time of leave-taking came, Nelson shook hands all round, until he came to Anna.

"Good bye, Anna; perhaps we may not meet again for years."

"Do not talk such nonsense," said Anna gaily; "of course you will be here in the summer."

"Good bye till the summer, then," said Nelson. "By the bye, did Michelson chance to say at Mansford Park whether he should be down here next summer?"

He fixed his keen eyes upon Anna's, as if he would read her soul. He read quite enough. The blush—the confusion—the stammered "I do not remember—I—I think not"—told their own tales. He shook her hand coldly, and turned away, saying to himself, "What a fool I am!"

Jessie was not in the room, and he was in the court before he remembered that he had not wished her good-bye.

"You have quite forgotten me," said a voice, half sad, half playful. Jessie was lighting Captain Burford out, who had stayed behind to bid her good-night.

"He will forget his head next," growled the

Captain; "his brains are already here, there, and everywhere."

"I was just coming back," stammered Nelson.

"Never mind," said Jessie gently, "I hope you will have a very pleasant visit. Good bye."

"Good bye—God bless you, Jessie!" said Nelson, giving her hand the old friendly shake and pressure that always made her happy; "I wish we were all more like you."

"What does he mean?" sighed Jessie, watching them through the gate. "How changed he is! I hope he does not—oh! God grant that he may not—for his own sake—for mine—anything but that—"

Even to herself she could not finish the sentence, and say, "I hope he does not love Anna."

"You will take cold," said a sweet voice by her side, and a little hand lay in hers.

It was Tiny. A quick perception, and the keenest feelings, had told the child that something preyed on Jessie's mind. She had watched her from the bed they shared together, when Jessie had thought her asleep, and had seen her brush tears from her eyes, as she sat dreamily reading, as was her custom before she slept, some book of devotion. Tiny associated this with Nelson—she did not know why; but she supposed it was on account

of the Captain's hints respecting their juvenile attachment. She did not much like Nelson. She thought he was not as kind as he ought to be to Jessie; and that night, when she saw him leave the house without even bidding her farewell, she was very angry with him, and thought, by creeping out after her kind friend, to console her for the neglect. Strange that this quiet child should be the only one of the party, Captain Burford excepted, who had an insight into the real state of Jessie's mind. Anna was too much absorbed in herself to think much of another; Aunt Betsey never had any discernment at all; Pynsent disdained such things as beneath his notice, and felt sure that Jessie had too strong a mind to be made unhappy by any attachment whatever; Louisa Colville could not understand the ins and outs of the case; and Charles was too much absorbed in his painting, future prospects, and endeavours to get rid of his nervous debility, to study the affections.

Here it may be well to say that Charles was getting gradually better. With the aid of Tiny's ever-ready shoulder and a crutch, he managed to get from place to place, and even to walk up and down the sunny path in the garden at midday. Still there was a slight lameness, which Pynsent feared he would never lose. When Charles heard

of Mr. Michelson's departure after the election and of Anna's refusal, his hopes of patronage from him were over. But Uncle James declared he should not be disappointed, but should go to London, and thence to Italy, at his expense.

"Dang my buttons, man, you got the illness by that confounded old bull of mine," he would say, "and it is only just that I should bear the consequences."

"Oh, Uncle!" said Anna, "you know that I can give at least fifty pounds a year towards Charley's improvement. Thirty will be quite enough for my clothes and travelling expenses."

"Why it was only the other day that you dedicated twenty towards paying old Skinner the mortgage," suggested Pynsent.

"Oh! so I did," said Anna; "then I can only give forty to Charley, and must make twenty do for myself."

"And the five pounds a year for Lizzy Durman?" said Jessie.

"And the numerous donations you promised to send all the workpeople?" insinuated Charles.

"And my new desk?" said Uncle James.

"And that expensive book on Consumption that I am to have when you receive your first quarter's wages?" said Pynsent.

"My dear Pynsent, how vulgar!" said Aunt Betsey; "pray do not make her position worse than it is."

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Betsey, it is far from vulgar: all the low people have 'salaries,' and I assure you 'wages' is by far the most uncommon term. You must allow me to say, 'When Anna goes to her place, and receives—'"

"Pynsent! I shall leave the room," said Aunt Betsey, rising.

"There again, Aunty, do not all the servants go to 'situations'? whereas all the grand people, Ministers, and nobody knows who besides, are in 'place.'"

"There is something in that," said Aunt Betsey, reseating herself.

"But the money, Anna," said Uncle James. "You have begun to follow the family failing of 'eating the calf in the cow's—'"

"Oh!" shrieked Aunt Betsey, stopping her ears.

"You should say as the French do, Uncle," said Anna,—"eating your corn in grass."

"Not half so expressive," growled Uncle James. "No offence, Miss Betsey!"

"Miss Betsey" bowed forgiveness.

"Oh! I am going to keep an account-book,"

said Anna, "and then I shall know how my money goes."

Uncle James slipped a five-pound note into her hand, and told her to be a good girl and "mind her books," a piece of advice he had given her so regularly every half-year, that he thought it only proper to repeat it on the present occasion.

Leaving home was now no new thing to Anna, and, by a strange inconsistency, she longed to go. On the eve of her departure she was all excitement. One thing preyed upon her mind, which was, Aunt Betsey's continued stiffness. She must try to overcome her ill-feelings: with this end in view she tapped submissively at her bedroom door the last thing at night.

"Come in," said her aunt.

"It is I, Aunty," she said, opening the door.

"Oh!" said Aunt Betsey with dignified emphasis.

"I am very sorry—" began Anna, much like a naughty child.

"Pray do not give yourself any trouble on my account," spoke out Aunt Betsey grandly.

"I am going away tomorrow, Aunty; to a new country, almost — surely you will not part in anger?"

Anna's tears began to flow.

"I am not angry," said Aunt Betsey, turning away.

"But you are not my own kind, indulgent Aunt Betsey," said Anna, drawing near; "I want you to be what you were before that horrid man came between us: I hate him."

"Jessie would say that is unchristian," said Aunt Betsey rather tremulously.

"So it is; but do not you hate him a very little bit yourself? At all events you used to love me, and pet and spoil me; and why should he hinder you now? Come, Aunty, make up, as you did years ago, when I offended you."

Aunt Betsey's eyes were growing moist, and Anna saw it: she threw her arms round her.

"You were much too good for him always, Aunty, and are so still."

"No, no," sobbed Aunt Betsey, taking Anna to her heart; "I was foolish—foolish. Take warning by me," and leaning her head against Anna, she gave way to violent grief. Nothing but a vision of Pynsent could have checked the hysterics.

Never before had Aunt Betsey made anything like a confession; but now, as if suddenly startled into it, she poured forth the history of her first and only real love. It was enounced in a way

peculiar to her, and amidst sobs and tears. She spoke of her beauty as of a thing of which she was perfectly conscious; of her prospects when young; of her trusting, happy girlhood; of the admiration she had excited; of the compliments she received; of the lovers she had had; and finally of her one great disappointment, that had embittered her whole life, and made her, between perpetual hopes and fears, useless to others and herself. As she got excited by her subject, Anna discovered that what *she* now was, Aunt Betsey must have been, with a mind less cultivated and less advantages in education. She had had no pious mother or careful sister, but had been the spoiled pride and pet of a weak, fond father. Her vanity and pride of family had been fostered rather than repressed, and she had sinned without knowing that she sinned. Harsh disappointment had been her only teacher, and had not taught her well, because her mind had been unprepared for the reception of his doctrine. Perhaps this opening of her whole heart to her favourite niece was the first genuine effort that heart had made towards self-examination and improvement: let us hope that it may be followed by others.

Anna's tears flowed freely with those of her aunt, and she made many good resolutions during

the narrative to avoid the errors into which poor Aunt Betsey had fallen. She felt more compassion and sympathy for her foibles and sorrows than she had ever done before: she experienced a certain consciousness of the sad truth, that in most cases it is want of tenderness and sympathy and gentle probing of the wounded heart that makes so many wounds incurable. Oh, could we but see sometimes how they bleed, when no eye but God's is looking on; could we but learn from our blessed Saviour how to handle them, and study how best to heal; there would be fewer secret sorrows in this life; less of unknown anguish borne with a martyr's resolution, whilst the world is scorning the sufferer; fewer broken hearts; less unreclaimable wickedness; less agony; less crime. In days of chivalry women studied the art of medicine, and the healing properties of herbs, with a view to the amelioration of bodily suffering; let her now study all the Christian graces, and the way to use them, with a view to healing the broken heart. Instead of the mocking laugh or scornful jest, let her try the winning smile of love and charity; instead of pride and haughtiness, let her use the attractive loadstone of humility; let her seek daily and patiently the deeply-hidden cause of the evils that are festering around her, and then apply the

arts that careful study has taught her. Few are there so wretched or so hardened in sin as to be dead to the true spirit of love and sympathy.

The following morning Anna departed, amidst many tears. Pynsent accompanied her on her first day's journey, remained with her the night at the inn where she was to sleep, saw her into the the Cardigan mail the next morning at about three o'clock, and, having given her much good brotherly advice, and begged her to apply to him in all her difficulties, returned to Fairfield the following night.

Nothing remarkable occurred at Fairfield during the next six weeks. We will speak of Anna's adventures in the next Chapter, therefore excuse ourselves from descanting on her letters in this, much as they were read and commented on at home. Uncle James and Captain Burford came, as usual, for rubbers, and in their capacities of advisers and guardians. Jessie recovered her cheerfulness; Pynsent went on working, and grumbling with his patients, and teaching Louisa Colville chess of an evening, and Charles and Tiny continued to draw all possible likenesses, and to love one another with singular depth and warmth.

But all this quiet home happiness came to an end. The friends with whom Miss Colville was to

return to India were to sail shortly, and she was summoned to London to prepare for her voyage. Charles determined to be strong enough to accompany her, and Tiny was to travel under their joint care. The notice was short, and poor Louisa, whose feelings were, perhaps, all the deeper because her natural reserve and shyness prevented their appearing, was in great distress. Even the phlegmatic Pynsent began to think how much he should miss his chess opponent, and to wish there was no such country as India in the world to swallow up pretty young ladies, and marry them to all kinds of captains, colonels, or gouty generals.

The various packings were completed, and our friends were sitting round the hall fire, talking by fits and starts, and thinking more. Upon two, at least, of the little party, a great change was about to come. Louisa was to quit one country for another, to lose dear friends and find beloved and loving parents. Very mingled were her feelings. The first genuinely happy months that she had spent since she left India, a child, had been passed at Fairfield. She had begun to love every member of the family, particularly Jessie, to whom she, as well as everybody who knew her well, felt drawn by a power that no one else seemed to possess. She knew that if she were in joy or sorrow, she

should fly equally to Jessie for sympathy. Pynsent, too, the half uncivil, but true Pynsent,—there was much in him that attracted her. She was grieved that she should never see him again; that even when she returned to England he might be married and removed from Fairfield. She was particularly vexed that he should seem to know so little of her true character, and always look upon her as a smart, fashionable young lady, with no feelings beyond an Indian ball-room, and a full intention of marrying an Indian officer. She had a good deal of discrimination of character, and she knew this was the case. Pynsent systematically despised young ladies. He thought no woman worth a penny until she had lost her beauty, and was verging on old-maidism. They were all alike as long as they were young ladies, and to be admired in the same way as little pigs or puppy-dogs were to be admired, for their looks. He made an occasional exception in favour of a plain girl, because he fancied that if she had no beauty, she had no conceit. This was a decided mistake of Master Pynsent's; for plain people may fancy themselves pretty, and be vain of what they do not possess. Be this as it may, Louisa almost wished herself ugly, that she might prove to Pynsent that there were at least some grains of sterling ore in her

character. How she wished her parents were coming to live in England! then she could have Jessie to stay with her, and could, in turn, often visit Fairfield. Now she was going away for ever.

Upon Charley, too, this journey to London was producing strange effects. He was about to make the first step toward the high point at which he aimed,—to see paintings, to hear of paintings, to study paintings, to look upon the originals of those masterpieces of the art that he had as yet only seen engraved; to labour with an end in view,—a noble end,—the production of works equal to those he hoped to see. The weak, shrinking, sensitive boy became a man as by sudden transition, and Tiny looked upon him as already a Correggio.

Poor Tiny! Many and sad were the tears she shed at the prospect of leaving Fairfield. Not even the certainty that Charles would be in London could make up to the child for parting with Jessie, and quitting the dear, cheerful, happy country place that had been to her beautiful as one of her child-dreams. Every pigeon, every fowl, the robins that came upon the window-sill, nay into the house, for crumbs, the big Newfoundland dog, the rooks that cawed in the elm-trees, the cattle, the rough farm servants,—everything and person belonging to Fairfield had twined round her young

heart like ivy round a tender sapling. And now to be obliged to go back to dull, dusty, lonely Peckham, without any one who could enter into her deep thoughts, or understand why she was so quiet and unlike a child. True, she should be very glad to see her mother again, and her kind guardian, for she loved them both, and she knew she was ungrateful thus to regret Fairfield; but had she not known happiness and real sympathy for the first time during the past months, and could she help deploring that she should know them no more?

"Will you come and keep house for me, little deary?" said bluff, kind-hearted Uncle James, putting down his pipe, and taking her on his knee. He had been watching the quiet tears steal down her cheeks and her furtive efforts to conceal them, and could stand it no longer. "I want a housekeeper: Jessie can't come, and Anna won't: what do you say?"

"I wish I was big enough," whispered Tiny, resting her head on her friend's shoulder, and letting the tears hide themselves in his coat; "but mother wants me at home."

"It is very hard that I can never get a housekeeper," said Uncle James, glancing at Aunt Betsey, majestically knitting, yet colouring slightly, as if conscious by intuition.

"Tiny is going to get big, and marry me," said Captain Burford, actually rising from his seat to cross over and stroke the back of her head, as she hid her face on Uncle James's shoulder: "we will have such a wedding! And who knows but we may get up another at the same time?" he added, glancing at Jessie. "I wish Nelson was here,—hang the lad!"

Sympathetic tears were beginning to appear in Louisa's eyes, and Jessie's were already full; Tiny began to sob.

"Come, come! cheer up! 'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence; won't it, Miss Burton?" said Captain Burford.

Even Aunt Betsey was wiping her eyes, whilst Pynsent, the heartless wretch, was only thinking of the fire. How busily and impatiently he pulls about that huge piece of wood, and treads upon the big tabby cat, and pshaws, and wishes the cat would keep her place, quite heedless of the pain poor Puss is feeling in her tail and the corner of one paw, thanks to his great thick boot.

"Pynsent, how clumsy you are!" cries Aunt Betsey, forgetting Tiny in her sympathy with her favourite cat.

"Tiny, you had better come to bed, dear," said Jessie; "you must be up early, and will want a long night's rest.

Good Uncle James put his arm round the child and kissed her, whispering, with a woman's tenderness, that she must buy something up in London to keep for his sake, and slipping a sovereign into her hand. Tiny tried in vain to say thank you; and hurrying from one to the other with kisses and good-nights, she went, sobbing her little heart out, upstairs with Jessie. For the first time the independent little child-woman passively allowed herself to be undressed. Jessie let her grief have way. When the night-gown was on, and Jessie took the brush to arrange her long, soft hair, she seemed to recollect herself, and to make an effort to cease crying. She looked up into her kind friend's face, and the expression of her eyes was so mournful, that Jessie was pained by it.

"Tell me why you are so very unhappy, Tiny," she said, as the child threw her arms about her.

"I do not know; I cannot tell; because I am wicked: but I am so very, very sorry to go away."

Jessie sat down, and drew her towards her. "If you have any sorrow, and can confide in me," she said gently, "I will be a true friend, darling."

"It is not a sorrow, and it is a sorrow," sobbed the child. "My mother sometimes looks sadly on me, and sometimes talks as if I did not belong to her, and wonders what will become of me; and

Mrs. Hicks, who lives with your uncle, is unkind, and says wrong things to me, that hurt me at my heart, and make me feel as if I should almost die."

"What can she say to you, dearest child? She cannot mean to hurt you."

"I suppose not, but she does. Sometimes she says I have no right to come there with honest people; and my mother has no right to be living upon other folks' money, and that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Indeed I do not know why. I think, and think, and try to do well; and mother is very good and kind, if she is not as clever as you and Anna. I try very, very hard to learn, that I may do something for myself, because I know she means that Mr. Barnard keeps us; and mother and I sew all day to earn what we can, and she is not strong: and we both feel it all very much, but we never talk to one another about it. It seems stranger than ever to me, now I see how different everything is here, and how happy you all are. I wish I could know how to keep myself: I think I shall be able soon. I would rather be a servant; I should like to be Mr. Barnard's or your little servant; but I cannot bear what Mrs. Hicks says, even though I cannot quite understand what it means."

Tiny had told her little tale, interrupted by

many sobs. Perhaps she had never spoken so much before at once. Jessie had listened with great interest and surprise: strange fancies crowded into her mind. She had often wondered what had given her uncle such an interest in the child, and how he had become her guardian, and why he had forbidden Anna, from the first, to ask about her. Now she wondered more; but she set to work to console Tiny, and to think how she could best help her.

"You must not mind what Mrs. Hicks says, love, so long as you do your duty. If you pray to God, He will make your path clear for you in His good time."

"I do, Jessie, I do; and I feel comforted."

"That is right, Tiny. Whenever you have any sorrows or joys, carry them, either by prayer or praise, to your Father in Heaven. Whenever you want an earthly friend, come to me or write to me: whatever I can do I will, please God. Perhaps you may be obliged to support yourself young,—it is impossible to say,—and you must be usefully brought up. You will do your best, I am sure, for Uncle Timothy's sake, as well as your mother's and your own."

"Oh yes!" sobbed Tiny, "I only want to know how; I should like to begin tomorrow. I

can work, and read, and write now, and cipher a little. I will try hard,—indeed, indeed I will."

"Now, dear, you must get into bed; you are shivering with cold. How thoughtless of me! Wrap this great shawl all round you. There! Will you say your prayers with me tonight? We will ask God to tell us what to do for your good."

Tiny knelt down at Jessie's knees, and repeated her child's prayer, in which Jessie joined, adding her own supplications for the little innocent who had so trustingly confided in her love. She saw her into bed, and watched by her till she fell asleep, thinking how little her own disappointments seemed, by the side of the real trials that are for ever renewing in the great battle of life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court.
Meet welcome to her guests she made,
And every courteous rite she paid."—SCOTT.

EVERYBODY knows that the life of a governess is rarely a happy life. We are not going to dive into the causes of this fact, but a fact it is. It matters not whether the fault is on the side of the governess, or on that of the family in which she resides, or on both sides; but she seldom feels at home with those in whose service she is passing an existence. I believe custom has a great deal to do with this: it is the fashion for governesses to be isolated human beings. What one lady does another must do. It is her duty, as well as her profession, to teach and amuse children, and of course she must be doing her duty morning, noon, and night. Fashionable mothers may do their duty at secondhand; and having obtained a lady

to fill their places with their children, may follow their own devices; reserving the blessed privilege of politely lecturing their governess if their children are not, in all respects, as perfect as they feel assured they ought to be. What matter if the said governess does feel aggrieved and angry? if she does shed bitter tears when she retires at night, after a hard day's fagging, to her bedroom? if she does wish herself dead,—or in Australia with the poor needlewomen,—or starving at home with the mother or invalid sister, or, maybe, worthless husband, whom she helps to support? She ought to be ashamed of herself for so doing; she ought to feel grateful for her salary, food, and lodgment; she ought to study all kinds of unknown tongues, and practise on all kinds of musical instruments—yea verily, as many as Nebuchadnezzar caused his musicians to play: and all with a view to teaching them again to those beloved pupils, whose parents are so considerate for her happiness and comfort! There may be some Beckey Sharps in the world who are seeking nothing but their own pleasure and good, to the neglect of the children committed to them; and there are also some mistresses of families who strive, heart and hand, to make those around them happy, and who especially consider the governess thrown upon their care and kindness

by untoward circumstances in their own homes: but these, on both sides, are rare. Beckey Sharp has been keenly and ably described by one who truly has "the pen of a ready writer." With a pen less brilliant and pointed, but, I would fain hope, as true, let me endeavour to paint the exception on the other side—the employer who strives to do *her* duty.

The Lady Georgiana Meredith received Anna Burton with a warm and friendly shake of the hand. She called her two pretty, shy, smiling children to her, and taking a hand of each, put the little trembling fingers into each of Anna's hands, and said she hoped they would be very good children, and strive to make Miss Burton very happy. Anna pressed the little hands, and longed to kiss the sweet innocent faces, but did not quite know whether it would be right. The eldest, little Violet, soon settled her doubts by holding up a blushing, inviting cheek, to which the second, Rose, added another. Anna kissed them with all her heart, and Lady Georgiana looked smiling on. Then her ladyship led Anna across the room to a large easy chair by the fire, where an elderly lady was sitting, also smiling. She rose when Anna approached, curtseyed, and held out her hand.

"We are all very glad to see you, Miss Burton,"

she said, reseating herself; "are we not, Violet?"

"Oh yes, Grandmamma," said the little girl glancing very lovingly into Anna's beautiful face—the very face to attract a child.

"I am very much obliged, very," said Anna, with tears in her eyes: she had little expected such a reception.

"You must be very cold and tired," said Lady Georgiana; "will you come to your room?"

Anna followed her upstairs, and into a nice, roomy bedroom, in which a large fire was blazing and a tea-kettle singing briskly.

"I hope you will find everything comfortable here," said Lady Georgiana; "should you want anything, you have only to ring, and your maid will come at once. The same servant will wait on you and the children, and she is wholly under your control. Would you just like to look at your schoolroom and the children's room whilst we are here, that you may be put *au courant* at once?"

They went out into the nice, broad, airy corridor, and into the room adjoining Anna's bedroom. It was a large, cheerful sitting-room, with no schoolroom air, save the pleasant atmosphere of books, maps, and pictures. There was a nosegay of hothouse flowers on the table, and a bright fire in the grate.

"The children gathered these, and arranged them for you this morning," said Lady Georgiana: "they have been very anxious about you."

Into the corridor again, and thence to another large bedroom.

"This is the children's bedroom; and this next room their playroom, and the maid's sitting-room. Whenever you want half an hour's leisure you can send them here. I have perfect confidence in Ruth, their attendant; and am, besides, a great deal with them myself. And now we will return to your own apartment. I have ordered high tea for you, instead of dinner, because I think it is so much pleasanter after a journey, and the children are so anxious to have their tea with us."

Anna could do nothing but look shy, pleased, tearful, and grateful. Words would not come to express her thanks. She had expected to find matters so cold and cheerless amongst the grand people to whom she was going; and on the contrary, all was so warm and cheerful.

"And now," said Lady Georgiana, lingering near the fireplace and leaning her elbow on the mantelpiece, "I wish you, Miss Burton, to make yourself at home here. We live very quietly, and see little company, but we all live together. Our hours are early, and my mother's advanced age and

health require regularity, so we are regular people. When lessons are over, we shall be always glad to have you with us. The children have been accustomed to be so much in our society, that they are quite little old women, and would feel greatly being shut out from it. They were only reconciled to regular school by the promise that they might spend their play hours with Grandmamma when they chose."

The tears that had been gathering in Anna's bright eyes, now fairly rolled down her cheeks: tears of genuine gratitude from the orphan. Such tears you may command at will, all ye mothers of families, who receive young ladies into your homes and hearts, instead of into your schoolrooms and service.

"I will do my best for your children," was all that Anna could say; and the simple words were all that Lady Georgiana asked.

Anna, like most of her sex, had a heart sensible to kindness. Woe to that heart which is not! She could be led to anything by such words as she had heard, such gentle manners as she had seen. Yes, "gentlewoman" indeed was Lady Georgiana Meredith. Would that all the high-born women of the world deserved the title so well, and bore it so meekly!

Whilst Anna is left alone to wipe her eyes, arrange her dress, and ponder over the kind reception she has had from the relatives of Chatham Michelson, let us return again to the handsome drawing-room she has left, and give a hasty sketch of its two noble-minded inmates.

The Dowager Countess of Loughlow, who sits in the large, velvet, high-backed chair, is the widow of an Irish earl. Her husband died some twenty or thirty years ago, leaving her with two daughters, one arrived at marriageable age, the other not more than ten years old. He had been an extravagant man, and therefore beyond her own property of a thousand a year, settled on herself and her children, she had nothing. The title and estates passed to a cousin of the Earl's. She went abroad with her daughters, and resided there some years. Her eldest daughter married Mr. Michelson shortly after. The match appeared a good one, as Lady Catherine had nothing during her mother's life, and Mr. Michelson was a man of large fortune, and supposed to be of considerable talent. It was not a happy match, and caused the good Countess much grief. About ten years afterwards, and not very long before Lady Catherine's death, her other daughter, Lady Georgiana, married Sir Thomas Meredith, a Welsh baronet, also a man of wealth.

and, what was far better, of genuine worth. The Countess came into Wales, and resided with her daughter and son-in-law, who were as united and happy a couple as ever graced either palace or cottage. Soon after the birth of little Rose, Sir Thomas Meredith died, leaving his wife sole mistress of all he possessed in the world. Since that melancholy period—the one great, black, never-vanishing cloud in the life of Lady Georgiana—the mother and daughter devoted themselves to each other, and to the little Violet and Rose. The aged Countess had gone through unnumbered trials during her lifetime. She lost a son and daughter, born between the two surviving children: she had a wild, extravagant, faithless husband; she saw one daughter married to a selfish, heartless man, and neglected until she died of a broken heart; and finally she lost a son-in-law, dear to her as if he had been her own son. But she never repined: she sorrowed, but not as one without hope.

Very beautiful is that aged gentlewoman. We will not pause to convince the sceptic in such matters, that age may be beautiful, but simply describe her. A face, colourless as the marble mantelpiece near which she sits, somewhat wrinkled, doubtless, but the wrinkles have not disfigured it; a thin, marked nose; a calm, high brow; thin, pale lips,

at the corners of which a soft smile always dwells, like a moonbeam on a white cloud; eyes yet undimmed by fifty years of tears—soft, sweet, melancholy, yet beaming brown eyes, telling of holy thoughts, gentle sympathies, untold loves and untold griefs; two bands of white hair, unshaded by a single streak of brown, binding the pale, placid forehead, like snow around a winter rose. A cap of rich white lace, simple in form, but graceful, surrounds that face, and covers a portion of that silver crown of honour. A black satin gown, and large scarf edged with swan's-down, clothes the venerable figure. Dignified, but not haughty, is the somewhat stately carriage; erect, but not formal, the still unbent form. Beautiful may have been the Countess in the first warm blush of her early summer, but never more beautiful than she is now, in the sun-illumined snows of her closing winter. Yes, such an old-age is lovely, made lovely by the quiet, Christian spirit that dwells within the fine calm frame.

Look at a pure white rosebud, just bursting from its green calyx, and you see the little Violet Meredith, now seated at her grandmother's feet. Watch the rose when it is full blown, pale, large, and sweet, and you see the Lady Georgiana. Mark, again, the flower when it is beginning to reclose.

and one or two of its snowy petals have fallen, one or two have begun to wither—and you see the Countess. A shade more sorrowful than of old is the Lady Georgiana's pale, sweet face: a degree less erect her graceful figure: for when she lost the husband, who was more to her than life itself, she lost the brightness of her smile, and the elasticity of her mien. But she gained that look of benign resignation,—of patient, heavenly meekness.

When Anna, radiant and bright as morning, entered the room, it was like a warm sunbeam striking in amongst the stars at night. As she turned the handle of the door, holding it, before she did so, nervously in her hand for some seconds, she heard a child's voice saying—

"Grandmamma, she is so pretty! Did you see her black eyes and rosy cheeks, Mamma? Oh, I love her very much already."

Poor Anna's heart beat with more real pleasure at the child's praise, than it had ever done at a compliment before.

"Violet, put Miss Burton's chair here, by the fire," said Lady Georgiana, glancing at Anna, as she drew, trembling and shy, towards the tea-table, which was supplied with all kinds of good things, and at which Lady Georgiana was presiding.

The Countess looked up from a book she had in her hand, and smiled as she caught Anna's eye. Anna thought she saw a look of Chatham, and the colour came to her cheeks. Tea passed over, and they were all seated round the fire, before there was much conversation. Little Rose managed to place her low stool very near Anna's side, and by degrees looked up into her face when she spoke, and manœuvred to touch her dress, until the small hand rested on the lap, and finally found its way into hers.

When the children were gone to bed, the principal part of the conversation was about them. Lady Georgiana told Anna of their dispositions, tastes, and of her own plans for their improvement and happiness. These were so judicious and evidently had been so long and anxiously considered, that Anna had nothing to do but to listen, and to resolve to follow them to her best ability. With a frankness natural to her, and called forth by Lady Georgiana's confidential tone, Anna said that she had not been used to teaching; that she had the art, for a great and noble art it is, to learn from the beginning; and that she hoped Lady Georgiana would assist her in arranging the studies of her children.

I must here pause to give a hint to mothers.

arising from this request of Anna. When, like the Lady Georgiana, they will meet their governess kindly, easily, and frankly, as a lady, and, to a certain extent, an equal, they will find her anxious to help them in carrying out their plans, as well as in making and arranging their own. Had Anna been met proudly and haughtily, by one inconsiderate for her happiness and comfort, she would have set to work proudly and haughtily. She would have been angry if the Lady Georgiana had interfered in her department. She would have resolutely shown that she knew what she was about as well as an experienced teacher of forty, whether she knew or not; she would have looked coldly on the children, even though they were sweet and lovable, of one who looked coldly upon her. This is a temperament not peculiar to Anna, but common to young girls just entering upon life, who have not been, as many have been, toiling and struggling from childhood. Anna was of good family, admired for her beauty, highly educated, somewhat spoilt, and differing in nothing from any other handsome and fashionable young lady, save in the fact that she was beginning a career not very well suited to her taste. The Lady Georgiana took the only means of making it palatable. She showed that she did not consider the position of a

governess an inferior one; on the contrary, one to be respected. She joined heart and hand in the plans for her children's education: she did not command, she suggested, and suggested in such a way, that it was evident to Anna that she was not expected, as a matter of course, to abide by the suggestions, if her own plans and wishes were different.

Anna listened meekly, spoke little, but resolved. She did more towards becoming a teacher in that short evening, than she had ever done before; and when she retired for the night, instead of thinking of Chatham, Michelson or even overmuch of home, she found herself meditating seriously on Lady Georgiana's words and wishes, and, for the first time in her life, trying to lay down rules for instructing others.

The following morning Anna rose with the very late sun, and dressed quickly, for she understood that they were to breakfast at half-past eight. She stood in the window, gazing on the prospect, waiting for some kind of summons from some one, not knowing whether she was to breakfast with the children, or with the heads of the household. Before her lay a long expanse of smooth lawn, winding shrubberies, and magnificent trees. Through an opening in the trees a line of sea was visible, and a blue mountain. The house must have been three

miles from the sea, but there it lay, tranquil and glorious beneath the morning sun. Anna had never seen a mountain before she came into Wales, and now she bowed her heart before its grandeur. She stood as one entranced, touched to the soul by the tranquil beauty of Nature.

A soft tapping at the door, frequently repeated before she even heard it, at last aroused her. She opened it, and the little pupils appeared, each with a nosegay of the first snowdrops and laurestinus.

"Breakfast is ready," said Violet, after the morning salutations and shy kisses.

"Here are some flowers, if you please," said Rose, presenting her bouquet.

"Thank you, dear," said Anna, taking the flowers from the children, and placing some of the snowdrops in her bosom. "Shall we have time to put them in water?"

"May I do it?" asked Violet; and receiving permission, she took a little vase from the mantelpiece, and began arranging them.

"We are to have a whole holiday today," whispered Rose; "and Mamma says that, if you like, we may show you our ponies and gardens, and take you for a long walk."

"I shall like it very much," said Anna, stooping to kiss the sweet child, who was doing her best to please her.

"There! that is so pretty," said Violet: "snowdrops are so pretty."

"Very pretty," said Anna, with a half sigh, for a vision of the snowdrops and crocuses of Fairfield, and Jessie watching them, suddenly came before her mind. "And now perhaps we had better go to breakfast."

"There is the bell," said Violet; "we have prayers first, if you please."

The servants were all in the hall, as, with a little girl on each side, Anna passed through them into the dining-room. They stood respectfully as she passed, and then followed her and the children.

Lady Georgiana was seated with a book before her. She pointed to chairs near her, which Anna and the children took. The servants sat down, a goodly array, at the bottom of the room. Lady Georgiana then read a few verses of Scripture, and a short explanation of them, simply worded; she then read an impressive short prayer, during which all, of course, knelt: and when every voice had joined in Our Lord's Prayer, and she had concluded by the blessing, they again separated. Anna had felt a greater degree of solemnity during that quarter of an hour than she had ever felt before. Her heart was often reached through her senses; and the subdued light in the fine old

library, the row of respectable servants, the quiet, highbred children, and, above all, the Lady Georgiana's deep voice and reverent manner, had touched both her senses and feelings. She thought she should always be good in such a home, and prayed more earnestly than she had done of late to be made so.

The Lady Georgiana shook hands kindly with her, and made inquiries as to the night she had passed, etc. She said that her mother always breakfasted in her own apartments, but joined them at the other meals. They went into a cheerful little breakfast-room, where a good fire and a hissing urn made the frame glow and the eyes brighten. Lady Georgiana at the top of a small table and Anna at the bottom, with a child on each side, made up a little party well suited to the room.

The children looked impatient as soon as breakfast was over.

"Miss Burton must have many things to arrange, my dears," said their mother, "and we must not forget that we have one duty to perform: holidays do not exempt us from that pleasant duty."

"Oh no, Mamma," said Violet cheerfully, whilst little Rose looked disappointed.

"May Miss Burton read with us, Mamma?" said Rose, brightening up.

"Ask her, dear," said her mother, smiling.

"Will you read the psalms and chapters with us?" asked the child, going up softly to Anna.

"I should like it very much," said Anna, "if your mamma has no objection." And so it was settled, and so it continued as long as Anna was with them.

They all went upstairs, and into a pretty morning room, where they found the Countess in a warm dressing-gown, seated in an easy chair. She welcomed Anna, and told her she was very glad to have her join their little party. The children took two cases, containing a Bible and Prayerbook (presents of their grandmother), from a low shelf, and sat down on two little stools at her feet. The Lady Georgiana gave Anna a third case, and taking her own Bible and Prayerbook, seated herself on an ottoman by the fire. As Anna leant her elbow on a small table and opened the sacred books, her black curls concealed the one bright tear that rolled down her cheek, for again she thought of Jessie. The Countess began the first verse of the Psalms for the day, and then they read by turns, the children joining as gravely and attentively as the rest. Anna felt that it was "good."

After they had finished this devotional exercise

Anna gave herself up to the children. They took her to see their various pets and treasures; they led her through beautiful shrubberies, by romantic streams, across rustic bridges, along the edge of a mimic lake, in which was their own mimic island, through grand but leafless woods, and finally to the little church in the grounds. Everywhere there were glimpses of the sea and mountains. The children said they often rode down to the shore, and that Miss Burton was to have a pony to ride with them.

"There is Mr. Lewis Gwynne," said Rose, clapping her hands.

"Oh, come on, if you please, I don't like him," said Violet.

But Mr. Lewis Gwynne, a pale young clergyman, with a vast extent of white necktie, stopped to speak to the children. He raised his hat to Anna, and, with a very self-possessed and somewhat self-satisfied air, said, "Miss Burton, I presume?"

Anna bowed distantly, and walked on. She was not particularly struck by Mr. Lewis Gwynne, curate of Llanayron. He stood looking after her and arranging his tie and advancing whiskers. "What a fine girl!" he said to himself. Mr. Lewis Gwynne was convinced he should soon make a conquest.

With a heightened colour and good appetite

Anna returned to dinner at two o'clock. Dinner, like everything else, was conducted in excellent style. All was as well cooked, and the servants waited as attentively, as if it had been at eight; only there was no time lost: they dined, and there was an end of it. A modern luncheon would have occupied as long a period.

After dinner Anna went to arrange her room and to write to Jessie. Then Lady Georgiana and she had an hour's conversation about lessons in the schoolroom, when many important scholastic matters were arranged to their mutual satisfaction; Anna bringing forward Miss Primmerton's rules and regulations, which, modified by those of the mother, promised well. After this, Anna showed Lady Georgiana some of her drawings, and was honest enough to say that they were done under the superintendence of a first-rate master, and that she could not draw as well undirected. Lady Georgiana was an artist herself, and said she was sure that between them they should be able to teach the children as much as they would need for many a long year. She admired some of Anna's drawings very much, and advised her to begin to sketch from nature. But she was particularly delighted with a sketch that Charles had made for Anna, of Jessie, with Tiny on her lap.

"Who is that?" she asked: "what a calm, sweet expression, and what a lovely child!"

Anna was delighted to be able to say that it was her elder sister, and that her brother had drawn it. She felt elevated in the scale of being by having such a sweet-looking sister and clever brother.

Then Lady Georgiana questioned her kindly of her family, and finally ran off with the picture and Anna's drawings to her mother.

After tea they had some music. Anna really played and sang brilliantly,—that was the word; and her auditors were much pleased. Lady Georgiana produced some duets, which Anna played with her at sight. Then the little girls played a duet that their mamma had taught them, and so the evening slipped away till the children went to bed. Then the Countess took her knitting, and Anna fetched her workbox—she who had hated all kinds of work. But work, or make believe to work, she did, whilst the Lady Georgiana read aloud Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' which Anna tried to admire, but found herself insensibly thinking of something else. Sandwiches, biscuits, and wine and water came in, and the book was laid aside.

"I think you know Mr. Michelson, Miss Burton?" said the Countess, with a twitch in the corners of her mouth. Happily she did not re-

mark the bright quick flush that overspread Anna's face.

"Yes," replied Anna, with considerable hesitation, "I have met him occasionally."

"And my grandson, Captain Michelson, do you know him?"

Anna stooped to pick up her pocket-handkerchief, which she let fall on purpose, and in stooping thought it incumbent upon her to stroke a beautiful spaniel that was sleeping on the hearthrug.

"I met him at Sir Thomas Mansford's," she stammered, "a short time before I left home."

"He does not stay much at the Hall, I believe, does he?" asked Lady Georgiana.

"I think not; but I have been so much at school that I scarcely know."

"Does his father live much in the country?"

"I believe not: I have never seen him there more than twice or three times."

"Is Captain Michelson reckoned like his father?" asked the Countess; "I have not seen him for some years."

"No—yes—not very much," said Anna.

"Was Chatham much with the Mansfords?" asked Lady Georgiana. "We used to be very intimate with Lady Mansford some years ago, but our correspondence dwindled, until she was kind enough to write to me about you."

"Mr. Michelson seemed to be on very intimate terms with Sir Thomas Mansford," said Anna, evading the question, she scarcely knew why.

"Chatham was a very handsome youth," sighed the Countess, "and very affectionate. Now his letters are so hurried that I scarcely know what he is. Is he much liked, Miss Burton, in the county?"

Poor Anna! She could with difficulty bring out that "I believe so."

"Is Mr. Michelson still as popular in society as he was?" asked the Lady Georgiana with some hesitation.

"He appears to be so," said Anna.

The Countess fidgeted with her knitting, and moved nervously on her chair, then, as by a great effort, said, "Do you know what became of Miss Rutherford?"

Anna told all she knew, which was simply the report of her sudden departure from the Hall.

"Chatham used to be very fond of her," said Lady Georgiana. "She was very clever and handsome. There was a curious likeness of her in that child's face your brother sketched."

"How strange!" said Anna, "my sister once remarked that likeness."

"Did your sister know her?"

"They used to meet now and then in the cottages of poor people. Miss Rutherford was very good to the poor. I believe they became rather intimate in that way, and sometimes walked together. My sister liked her very much."

"Is Captain Michelson generous?" asked the pertinacious Countess.

"Very, I believe, to a fault," said Anna, with animation, forgetting herself for a moment in her wish to praise Chatham.

"I am thankful that he has not lost that," said the Countess aside to Lady Georgiana.

"I dare say we shall see him some day, Mamma," said Lady Georgiana cheerfully, seeing the Countess look despondent. "Young men, when they get into the Army, have so much to occupy their minds, that one cannot expect them to visit quiet people till they sober down a little."

"Perhaps so," said the Countess sadly, and rang the bell.

They went into the library, where the servants came in the same order as in the morning; and having had family prayers, they retired for the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

"See your guests approach;
Address yourself to entertain them sprightly,
And let's be red with mirth."—*Winter's Tale.*

Anna's presence at Plas Ayron was as pleasant and beneficial to its inmates as their society and example were to her. When she became at home—which in the course of a few weeks she did—her bright face, and gay, cheerful temper, animated manners, and brilliant conversation, were the means of rousing all, even the pensive Lady Georgiana, into occasional sallies of mirth that had been long foreign to the house. We have said that Anna was irresistible, and this is another proof of the truth of the assertion. The children loved her, and decidedly petted her, as did the Countess. As to the servants, they entirely spoilt her. They declared the house was more itself since she had been there than it had been since their master's death. She had a joke with them all, and the serious old butler said she was the

prettiest, merriest, and most ladylike governess he had ever seen in all his service.

Under the joint efforts of Lady Georgiana and Anna, the children got on famously. They were not forced—their mother was too judicious for that; she did not like hothouse plants as well as garden ones—but they were regularly taught, and with good temper. This was due to their mother. Her unvaried kindness to Anna, her ready approval of all her little efforts, her desire to make her happy, awoke such gratitude in the girl's nature, always warm and impressible, that she forced her quick temper into subjection, and urged her patience into action, that she might repay the debt she felt she was incurring. She was not by nature fond of being with children; she did not like teaching; but no one who saw her would have supposed so. It will be readily understood that such a discipline and the intercourse with minds superior in mental culture to her own, greatly benefited Anna. Day after day passed with little variety, but each day helped to inform her heart, and to teach her that there was something even more beautiful than beauty—the quiet refinement of the cultivated Christian mind. She forgot—almost forgot—her love of admiration. She did not forget Chatham Michelson, and his admira-

tion. She sometimes heard his name mentioned, and never without a blush. Once she heard the Countess express great pleasure at having received a letter of some length and much good-feeling from him, and this made her heart beat. She was constant to him—but then she had few temptations to inconstancy.

Mr. Lewis Gwynne was the only one with whom she could, if she would, carry on a little flirtation, *pour passer le temps*, and she did not consider him worth the trouble. She tormented him a good deal, and made him declare that she gave herself more airs than the Lady Georgiana,—she! only a governess! Yet he was as near being in love as he could be with a girl who had not a *sou*. He did not know that she was to have a thousand pounds screwed out of poor Fairfield if she married, or he might have permitted himself to fall in love. He preached high-flown sermons, which she, to the Countess's displeasure, cut to pieces when she came from church, as she did his white neckcloth and long hair. But he rather deserved cutting to pieces, it must be confessed, for he was the least bit in the world of a prig.

There were occasionally company days at Plas Ayron: grand dinner parties, at which the Lady Georgiana fêted the neighbouring gentry, and

kept up a show of hospitality. These were somewhat formal and stupid, and Anna, who was always present, rather dreaded them. There were few unmarried men in the neighbourhood, and the guests were generally papas, mammas, and daughters. Mr. Lewis Gwynne always made one of them, and sometimes a stray son, at home on leave from his regiment, or a young clergyman, a friend of Mr. Lewis Gwynne's, would be added, and received with delight by the young ladies, who, like Anna, mostly looked with horror on these stiff dinners. It was not that the Countess and her daughter were particularly formidable; but they were so very quiet, and lived such a retired life, that people were afraid of being merry in their presence, and had an impression that the Lady Georgiana had never laughed since her husband's death, which effectually checked their laughter. Anna, who laughed at a feather, as the saying is, used to astonish the young ladies, and helped very much to make them feel more at their ease. She played and sang, and played duets with Lady Georgiana, who induced the young ladies to perform; and so the evenings passed, till half-past ten or eleven brought the carriages, and put an end to what Anna always looked upon as the dullest hours of her life. In these parties various

were the opinions expressed of Anna by the different guests. All thought her handsome: there could be no dissenting voice on that point. Many said she had very fascinating manners; some, that she was too forward; some, that she was too well aware of her good looks; others, that she dressed too fashionably for her position; this one, that she had flirting eyes; that one, that she talked too much to the young men; most, that the Countess and the Lady Georgiana spoiled her, and, by making her so much at home, would render other governesses dissatisfied, and thus be a bad precedent. The "young men,"—few and far between they were, as we said before,—shocked their friends and relations by paying her more attention than they ought, according to their notions. True, nobody could say she courted their attentions; on the contrary, she was rather patronizing and high and mighty when they spoke to her, but she had a way of attracting them that papas and mammas did not like.

She decided upon having no holidays at Midsummer, because the distance from her home was so great, and she had been so short a time away from it. She might have had them if she liked; and truly she longed to see Fairfield and its dear inmates again: but a vague hope that Chatham

Michelson might make a tour of Wales during his next leave of absence, and that the leave might be in the summer, and that he might come to see his grandmother, which he had rather hinted he wished to do, decided her wavering mind, and she put off visiting her friends for another year. Holidays she had, during which she and the children made hay, wandered about the sea-shore on pony-back and on foot, went for long drives and morning calls with the Lady Georgiana, pulled the Countess about the walks in her wheel-chair, and almost lived out of doors.

One splendid July evening they were all to have a *fête champêtre* under the trees amongst the hay. There was a fine group of oaks far down in the park, close by a foaming stream, that rushed over rocks and beneath rocks down into the calm river Ayron that flowed below. Hither the servants had brought chairs and tables, and every imaginable luxury in the shape of fruits, preserves, creams, cakes, etc., all laid out in most tempting order. The Lady Georgiana had entered into the spirit of the thing, and the children and Anna were wild with pleasure: even the Countess was excited by the gaiety. A family of neighbouring children were invited for the occasion, and an elder brother and sister were to bring them.

Just let us watch the scene: it is a pretty one. Grandly the gnarled, brawny branches of the huge old centenarians of oaks stretch their leafy canopy of brilliant green over the new-mown emerald carpet beneath. Perseveringly, but in vain, the impudent, unblushing, broad-faced sun tries to peer through them at what is going on below. No sooner does his glance penetrate half-way down the screen, than a great arm flings out fresh foliage to intercept it, and thus baffles his impertinent curiosity. Upon a cushion on the ground beneath the trees, the Lady Georgiana sits, with a book in her hand, expecting the rest of her party. Servants are moving to and fro, busy and smiling, arranging and re-arranging the feast. By the side of the trees the bullying braggart of a stream brawls on its way, impotently dashing itself against the large rocky stones, or foaming over the branches of trees and briers that droop into it. All around, the haymakers, in their picturesque Welsh costume, are grouped at various distances,—now resting a moment on their rakes or forks to look furtively at their unusual guests,—now busily, and sometimes gracefully, drawing along the fresh, sweet hay in the long prongs of the rake. Away between the opening in those two high woods, you see the

ocean basking in the sun like a huge golden fish, and flanked on one side by the blue mountain, tipped with gold, that looks as if he were going to bathe in the orient sky. The sun is yet high up in the vast arch above, and seems resolved never to give place to any less heating influence; for the breezes are frightened away by his intense rays, and linger shyly amongst the trees—the only receptacles of freshness. Shade, delicious shade! how attractive you are to the toiling labourers, burning beneath the heat! how attractive to the merry birds, more fortunate than the labourers, for they have leisure to sing and make holiday within your dominions! how attractive to the weary cattle, languidly reclining beneath your influence!

And not less attractive to the venerable Countess and her attendant nymphs, now rapidly drawing near to you. Seated in her garden-chair, a large silk umbrella over her head, she is triumphantly wheeled along, her two little grandchildren pulling before, and Anna pushing behind. Just as they are about to leave the drive and cross the greensward, they perceive a gentleman approach, and wonder who he is.

"It must be Mr. Lewis Gwynne," says Violet.

"Or Mr. Jenkinson, who is coming with Mary and Janet," suggests Rose.

"No, he would wait for his sisters," says grandmamma.

Anna gazes fixedly into the distance. Nearer the gentleman approaches, and nearer; a fine, tall figure, and good carriage. He quickens his pace. Anna starts—turns pale—turns red—hides herself behind the chair—changes her purpose, and comes in front, and says with embarrassment—

"It is—I think it is Captain Michelson."

The Countess suddenly rises from the seat, steps from the chair, and in a few moments has her arms round the neck of her grandson, and is fondly embraced by him. Tears fill her eyes as she gazes on the young man, and it is some seconds before she recovers herself. Seeing this strange meeting from a distance, the Lady Georgiana walks towards the group. Meanwhile, with equal confusion on both sides, Anna and Chatham have shaken hands, and the little girls have been presented to their cousin. Chatham, seeing the feast under the trees yonder by the brook, insists on wheeling his grandmother towards it; but she declares the sight of him has given her such strength that she will walk, and leaning on his arm, followed by Anna and the children, they advance to meet the Lady Georgiana. Suddenly a carriage, full of young people, drives up, and stops opposite our group. The young

people get out, and in a few minutes Mr. Lewis Gwynne is seen. All the dispersed party unite in the middle of the large hay-field, and walk together towards the trees, the Countess leaning on her grandson. Anna has soon a cavalier on each side of her, in the persons of Mr. Lewis Gwynne and Mr. Jenkinson, but she has not much to say to either. Chatham glances back once or twice, and doubtless says to himself, "Annabella Burton is Annabella Burton still, the little coquette!" but he meets her eye once, and the quick blush half reassures him. The children run on together, and make almost as sweet, and quite as mirthful, music as the winged choristers in the large trees. The Lady Georgiana is astonished at finding herself saluted by that handsome young man, and highly delighted when she hears that he is her nephew.

In due course of time they reach the scene of their festivities, and seat themselves, some on chairs, others on the trunks of the trees, or new-mown grass, forming a pretty picture. Anna helps the Lady Georgiana to pour out tea and coffee, and looks, in her broad-brimmed garden hat, not unlike the Daphnes and Chloes of pastoral times. Of course the gentlemen make themselves useful, and flit about from Lady Georgiana to Anna, with warm water, cups and saucers, and all kinds of

edibles, whilst the happy children fly here, there, and everywhere, and look like so many fairies dancing and sporting on the greensward.

"I fear you are not well, my dear Miss Burton," said the Countess to Anna. "I am sure it was bad for you to draw me all the way from the house in the hot sun. You look so flushed, and you have thrown off your mantle; that is dangerous when you are heated. Chatham, will you take Miss Burton her mantle, and beg her to put it on?"

"No, really—thank you—I am quite well," said Anna, drawing back as Chatham approached.

"Pray allow me," said he, "holding up the light white muslin cloak; "you may take cold, though I scarcely know how this can keep you warm."

Again their eyes met. Anna turned away, and Chatham, throwing the mantle over her shoulders, returned to his grandmother's side, looking vexed. Anna made innumerable blunders in the matter of cream and sugar, and her attendant swains found her so reserved and unlike herself, that each asked himself what could be the matter.

"Have I been so unfortunate as to offend you, Miss Burton?" asked Mr. Lewis Gwynne in an under tone, as he took a cup of tea from her hand.

"Offend me? how?" asked Anna, looking surprised at the question.

"I do not know how, but your manner is so unusually constrained this evening."

"Really! I was not aware," said Anna; "but I assure you it would be too much trouble to be offended."

Mr. Lewis Gwynne bowed, but did not understand an answer that would have put down most people.

"Worshiped as usual," half-whispered Captain Michelson, as he too came for some tea for Miss Jenkinson: "'out of sight, out of mind,' is the general motto of ladies."

"And of gentlemen also," replied Anna, hastily bending over the teapot.

"Janet would like some strawberries and cream, if you please, Miss Burton," interrupted Violet, putting her hand on Anna's shoulder.

"Mamma says I may carry old Mary a whole basin of tea, Miss Burton," cries Rose, laying her little hand on the other shoulder. "Will you help me when you have finished, and give me a plate of cake and bread-and-butter for her children? they are all in the hayfield."

"Let me mix the strawberries and cream, and you carry that cup of tea to the young lady, little Cousin," said Chatham, seating himself on the grass at Anna's feet, with a plate of fruit on his

lap. "And may I go with you to take the tea to your old pensioner, little Cousin number two?"

"Rose is my name, Cousin Chatham, if you please," said the child.

"Well, Rose, may I carry the tea?"

"If Miss Burton will let you," was the demure reply.

Chatham laughed, and Anna joined.

"Will you let me, Miss Burton?" he asked, casting such an expressive glance at Anna, that hers soon fell beneath it.

"You are not under my tuition," she said.

"Oh, do not say so!" he rejoined.

"Chatham! what are you doing?" cried the Countess, from her seat under the largest of the oaks.

"Mixing strawberries and cream for little Janet," replied Chatham. "Who *is* little Janet?" he continued, addressing Rose.

"I will fetch her;" and the child ran off, returning soon with a rosy, curly-headed pet, that Chatham placed by his side, and to whom he gave the plate he had filled.

"I am so thankful he is not altered," said the Countess to her daughter. "See how nice he is to Miss Burton and the children."

"And so handsome!" said the Lady Georgiana,

not insensible to her nephew's good looks, however insensible she might have been to those of other men. "What a pretty group, Mother!—Chatham and the children all sitting round Miss Burton, and she looking so beautiful and bashful above them."

When the repast was concluded, Anna busied herself in filling the basin with tea, and collecting the plate of cakes, little Rose duly assisting.

"Oh! Aunt Georgiana," said Chatham, "I wish you would sacrifice the remains of the feast to the haymakers, in honour of my arrival."

"I do not think they would rejoice in strawberries and cream," said Lady Georgiana. "Watkins," turning to a servant, "order cold meat and bread-and-cheese and ale to be brought here. Tell the housekeeper she is to send enough for the haymakers."

"Come, little ones!" exclaimed Chatham, running away, followed by the children, who persisted in dragging Anna with them.

"*Pa sut yr ydych chwi?*"* said Chatham to an old man, who took off his hat as he came up. "You see I can talk *Cymraeg*."

He had mastered about a dozen Welsh sentences when he was a boy, and had not forgotten them.

* "How do you do?"

"*Hearty, diolch i chwi, Sir,*"* was the reply, with a pleased smile.

"You must all come and drink my health," said Chatham; and immediately began to collect the haymakers, and to send them forthwith to the scene of the festivities.

Old men and women, bashful youths and blushing girls, and some half-dozen children, were soon assembled round the cloth spread upon the grass, seated in picturesque attitudes, awaiting the round of beef, cheese, and ale, already visible in the distance. The provisions arrived, Chatham and Mr Lewis Gwynne carved vigorously, and had soon the satisfaction of seeing all their rough and ready guests eat with marvellous good appetite. The ladies went towards the brook, and remained away until they heard great cheering, when they returned to the pic-nic party, to hear Captain Michelson's health drunk, and to see Chatham standing up in his grandmother's chair, and making a speech, of which the listeners only understood the few Welsh sentences with which he continually interlarded it. The concluding, "*Iechyd da i chwi,*"† was rapturously received, and the young Captain was considered, and not altogether undeservedly, one of the kindest gentlemen in the world.

* "Very well, I thank you." † "Your health."

By this time the heat of the day had abated, and the cool breezes of evening were beginning to expel the sultry atmosphere. Leaving the rustic gathering to the care of the domestics, the more polished party strolled about amongst the sweet hay, or under the grand old trees by the brook. The merry children played here and there, and the Lady Georgiana was much scandalized at seeing Chatham covering them with the hay, after having tossed them down very unceremoniously upon the haycocks. As to the Countess, she thought everything he did perfect, and could not remove her eyes from the fine, manly figure, so gracefully bending to amuse childhood. And then she considered it so kind of him to come, once more, to visit her.

What deceptions do we not practise upon ourselves, and upon each other, during our lives, particularly the first half of them! How many of us go to visit aged grandmothers, aunts, cousins, friends, with the avowed dutiful purpose of compassionating their rheumatism, and amusing their old-age, whilst we have a secret eye to some comfortable legacy, fine estate, household furniture and plate, or, maybe, to the good sporting on the manor, or the still more amusing sporting within doors, as in Chatham's case!—some pretty cousin,

a companion, or cousin's governess, or some nice friend in the neighbourhood not to be met under other circumstances! And how blindly and kindly the good old gentleman or lady looks on, winking good-naturedly at the real facts of the case, and pretending to see the ostensible ones! The Countess knows that her grandson cannot come to visit her for the sake of her money, because half of it will be his at her death; but she does not know that the blushing and beautiful Anna Burton was nearly becoming her granddaughter, and is the attraction that draws the weathercock of a Chatham to Plas Ayron. And who would wish to undeceive the dear lady? Certainly not her grandson; certainly not Anna; they would not be so cruel. Who would desire to be undeceived under such circumstances? Nobody with any amount of anxiety about his own happiness. Let us clothe ourselves with the impression that our relations and friends visit us for our own sakes, and because they like our society and love our persons, and cast aside the suspicious habit of seeing real motives through the thick veil of innocent deception. On the one side we gain everything,—happiness, comfort, the belief that we are beloved, and perhaps, in time, the love itself: on the other side, we lose everything,—faith, felicity, friendship;

three fs well worth blending into one person, and much too valuable to be lost. Woe to that man who, dwelling in the "Palace of Truth," can look into the heart of his friend! He must inevitably quarrel with him directly; for where is the friend who could bear to have all his thoughts scrutinized,—the Orestes who considers his Pylades perfect? where, to return from ancient to modern examples, the military grandson who would devote a leave-of-absence to his grandmother?

"Who is that prig of a parson, my dear Grandmother?" said Chatham, eying Mr. Lewis Gwynne, who was assiduously talking to Anna.

"You remember our old rector, Mr. Gwynne?" was the reply; "he is his son, and the living is kept for him until he takes priest's orders. He is very good-natured: we think he has lost his heart."

"He seems a confounded fool!" said Chatham.

The Countess opened her eyes.

"My dear boy!"

"I beg your pardon, Grandmother; but I have a great aversion to parsons with huge white neckties; they always remind me of those pigeons with ruffs; and that fellow is so awfully conceited. How can Miss Burton bear to listen to him?"

"It would be a very suitable match in many ways, though certainly in point of manners and

appearance she is very superior," said the Countess.

"Yes, and in family and everything else," exclaimed Chatham; "the Burtons are an excellent old family—as good as any in Somersetshire."

"Cousin Chatham," here interrupted Violet, kneeling down at the bottom of the bank on which the Countess and Chatham were sitting, "will you help us to dance a quadrille? Mamma says we may under the trees in that nice smooth place."

"Do, my dear," said the Countess. "Do not mind me; I shall be delighted to look at you."

In a few minutes they were all dancing, and Chatham exhausting himself by humming quadrille tunes the while, in which Anna, compassionating his condition, occasionally assisted. That vile little coquette, seeing that Chatham looked thunder-clouds at Lewis Gwynne when she was dancing with him, became suddenly more animated, and made herself so agreeable to the "prig of a parson," that the said "prig" began to fancy he had completed his conquest of the beauty. Chatham however danced with her in his turn, and his thunder-clouds were soon succeeded by sunbeams, when he found that Anna was more charming than ever. She was more prudent than he was. Proud as she was of her conquest,—happy as she felt to see

Chatham again, she knew that, as governess in his aunt's family, she must not permit the familiar intercourse they had enjoyed at the Mansfords, and therefore rather avoided speaking to him apart than courted conversation.

The evening passed delightfully. They danced, and wandered about until nearly ten o'clock, when the carriage drove off the guests, and the family returned to the house. The moon had risen, and was disputing the kingdom of evening with the sun, whose fading beams proclaimed that the struggle was well-nigh over. The Countess, leaning on her grandson, and surrounded by the rest of the party, walked to her chair, and then gave herself up to his tender mercies as charioteer. All rejoiced in the presence of the gay and diverting Chatham.

CHAPTER XX.

"I know not how, but martial men are given to love; I think it is, but as they are given to wine; for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures."—BACON'S ESSAYS.

CHATHAM managed to exist for more than a month at Plas Ayron. He insisted on no alteration being made, either in the hours or occupations of the family, on his account; so that, after the first day, all went on quietly and regularly as usual. It would have diverted some of his army friends to have seen him dining at two o'clock and drinking tea at six, reading aloud of an evening, or wandering about with his little cousins and Anna. To have watched his devotion to his grandmother, and his attention to his aunt, his care of certain Welsh ponies on which Anna and the children were wont to ride, and his frequent visits to the schoolroom, to make inquiries and arrangements respecting the said ponies; they would have voted him a domestic character at once, and would have begun to inquire what could have made the gay and somewhat dissipated Captain Michelson so

steady and well-behaved. And they would not have been alone in their inquiries: the Lady Georgiana would have joined them. With all her placidity, she had a quick perception of the motives of those around her, and read character well. So did her mother, when not personally interested in those she studied. The following conversation may illustrate this difference between the parent and child. They were alone in the Countess's boudoir when it took place, Chatham, Anna, and the children having gone on an evening's pony expedition to the sea-shore.

"Surely, my dear mother, you cannot be so blind!" said the Lady Georgiana, in a voice, for her, somewhat elevated.

"I see nothing, my love, but the proper civility and politeness that are due from a gentleman to a lady, and that, in my younger days, every gentleman paid, and every lady received, as a matter of course. I am delighted to see that Chatham is above his generation in the present case, as some young men might rather eschew paying attention to a lady in Miss Burton's position."

"But can you not perceive that Chatham is never at his ease—never himself—except when he is in Miss Burton's presence? He is certainly always kind and gentlemanlike; but when does he

sit an hour at a time either with you or me, without finding some excuse for going to the children? He has faithfully promised Violet this thing, or he must do the other for Rose. When driving alone with us, he is absent, or anxiously inquiring how long our visit to such and such a neighbour will last; but if Miss Burton is of the party, the drive can scarcely be too long. I will say this for him, he is a very bad dissembler."

"My dear Georgiana, I never knew you so severe. I am only glad that he finds amusement, and is kept so long amongst us. I think he is naturally fond of children, and Violet and Rose are charming, everybody says. Of course Miss Burton, beautiful, accomplished, and agreeable, is an attraction, but not in the way you mean, I am convinced."

"At all events, it is dangerous for her: you allow that he is very attentive. There is no reason that she should not attribute his attentions to the right cause—at least to what I consider the right cause; and if, after all, he does, as you say, mean nothing, the disappointment to her may be great."

"Depend upon it, Miss Burton has been too much accustomed to admiration all her life to give more weight to it than it deserves. Look at her reception of Lewis Gwynne's very evident devotion."

"Strange, dearest mother, that you can perceive in an indifferent person what you cannot discover in one so near to you. Your argument may be easily turned against yourself. Miss Burton is wholly uninterested in Mr. Lewis Gwynne, and receives his attentions accordingly; but if you watch narrowly, you will not see the same indifference towards Chatham. She certainly behaves admirably; much more discreetly than I should have supposed she would have done: still the blushes and frequent confusion tell tales."

"Young ladies are always blushing, my dear: that is no criterion." The Countess spoke with slight irritability.

"Try Chatham, Mother: young military men are not given to blushing, yet I have seen him blush like a girl when you spoke of Mr. Lewis Gwynne and Miss Burton. I assure you some stop must be put to it."

"We put a stop to your sister's first attachment because the lover was not rich enough: she married Mr. Michelson, and was miserable for life. God forbid that I should have the sin of making her only son miserable in the same way! I wash my hands of everybody's attachments, and have done so ever since. Let them run their natural course,—live or die as God appoints. Not that I see any reason to fear on the present occasion."

"His father would never consent to such a thing: you know he is hard as iron."

"Harder, harder! You can make something of iron; yes, so you could of him—polish him into steel, which is harder still. I should have a wicked satisfaction in circumventing him. Chatham hinted the other night that he wanted him to marry Miss Erskine."

"My dear mother! that is not like you: we must love our enemies, and return good for evil."

"He was the death of my child; a slow, cruel, wearing death." The Countess was getting excited.

"Do you think there would be any harm in my speaking to Chatham, Mother, as his nearest relative and most interested friend?"

"There could be no harm; but beware of putting into his head notions that would not otherwise come there."

"He is not quite so innocent as that. If he is not serious, he is flirting with Miss Burton, and that we ought not to allow: she is under our protection, and we stand in the light of her guardians."

"You are right, my love; but I am sure Chatham is the soul of honour."

"All young men are till they are tempted; but henceforth just watch them with the new eyes I have

kindly given you, and then let me know whether you do not change your opinion."

"Be it so, my dear; and now let us go and look after them: I shall be on the *qui vive* from this time forth."

Whilst the Countess and her daughter were thus discussing their respective merits, Chatham and Anna were seated on a piece of rock, watching the flowing of the tide. The children were gathering pebbles and seaweed not far off, and the ponies were quietly picking such bits of grass as the interstices of the rocks afforded. Conversation had been animated between the pair on the rocks, to judge from the expression of their countenances; but there was a pause. Annabella's eyes were fixed on the advancing waves; Chatham's were gazing into hers, as if to read the meaning beneath their proud, defiant glance.

"But if my father would consent,—if I had the means," began Chatham with hesitation.

"You know he never will consent," said Anna hastily, "and that your means can only be increased by the death of your grandmother: and God grant her many more years to enjoy her own fortune."

"Amen! I am sure I should be the last person in the world to wish to shorten them. But if you

would only consent to an engagement, until times mend—"

"Until I am sick of teaching, and we are tired of one another, and finally, break off the engagement because you find me grown old and ugly. That is not to my taste. Besides, do you think your father would consent to an engagement, if he would not consent to a union?"

"But—but—of course I did not mean him to know—that would be madness."

"And the Countess, and Lady Georgiana, are they to be equally in the dark?" Miss Annabella was beginning to look dignified.

"Do you think yourself—would it be advisable for them to be made acquainted with what was done in direct opposition to my father's wishes?"

"And do you think that I—a Burton, the daughter of one of the proudest and most particular men in the world—would stoop to remain here as governess, knowing that I am voluntarily practising a deceit upon the very family who are fostering me? I had hoped you knew me better?"

The tears sprang into Anna's eyes, and she attempted to rise, but Chatham detained her.

"Forgive me—I am beside myself. I cannot bear to lose you: it is distraction—and I know not what to propose. Can you—will you suggest anything, if indeed you really love me."

Anna could have said, "Sell your horses and dogs, part with some unnecessary superfluities, and marry me on your pay as Captain," but pride and propriety equally forbade the words, and summoning all her resolution she said proudly—

"My only suggestion is, that we part. This kind of torture is, at least, bad for me."

"Part! and so coldly said!—and for you, perhaps, to marry another, and forget me as entirely as if you had never known me."

"Perhaps so: I cannot say: but I dare say not more entirely than you will manage to forget me."

"May I not write to you? Is there no way of inducing you to wait until—?" Chatham could not help seeing a kind of smile in the eyes of his tormentor, as he paused again on the word "until."

"Until your grandmother dies—you may as well finish the sentence. No: I do not think I am very constant by nature; I am sure I should not be so were I chained for any indefinite period; and I do not think you are half as constant as I am. We are not a hero and a heroine, nor have we many of the heroic attributes,—at all events I have not, and I will never promise what I may not, perhaps, perform. Besides, I do not choose to belong to any one whose family would not be proud to receive me amongst them. I am as good as any of

you. Titles or money are not superior to a line of unblemished ancestors, gentlemen by birth and nature. I know how it is: your father was selfish —you are selfish. You each want me just because you fancy me, but would not think me a good match for the other. I choose to be looked upon as equal by everybody, and would not stoop to a prince or an emperor."

"What can you mean, Miss Burton?" said Chatman, in evident astonishment: "have I done or said anything to merit such language?"

"I know what you all are," cried Anna; "you talk of equality as a matter of course; you say that talent equalizes—beauty refines—family ennobles; but you believe in nothing, act upon nothing, but money. Money! I hate the word. Family! yes, there is something grand in a good old family: men and women who add lustre to one another's names, and become more glorious the longer their race exists;—but money! paltry gold, silver, or copper, dug out of the earth, I spurn it, and everybody that makes a god of it."

As Anna uttered the last long speech, she rose from her seat, and waved her hands in the excitement of the moment. The children, who had been induced at first by her raised voice and agitated manner to cease from their amusement, now ima-

gined she was beckoning them towards her, and approaching, effectually put a stop to all further conversation.

"We must return now," she said impatiently, and, taking Violet's hand, proceeded towards the ponies.

Almost before Chatham could rise and follow, she had placed Violet on her pony and was herself mounted. Leaving him to manage for Rose, she cantered off, accompanied by Violet, who seemed much surprised at this mode of proceeding. They scarcely ceased cantering until they reached the house, Chatham and Rose following more quietly. As they had two miles to ride, it is not surprising that they were reproached by the Lady Georgiana for the heated state of their ponies when they arrived; but Anna excused herself under the plea of having hurried home to answer a letter she had forgotten, and at once hastened to her room to execute the said letter. Her flushed and excited face and manner did not pass unnoticed by the Lady Georgiana, who asked Violet whether anything was the matter with Miss Burton.

"I do not know, Mamma; but I think Cousin Chatham and she have been quarrelling," said the child.

"What do you mean, love? That is not quite the way to speak of grown-up people."

"Only we heard their voices rather loud from a distance, and saw Miss Burton leave Cousin Chatham in a hurry; and Cousin Chatham looked so surprised! Oh, Mamma, I do hope they have not quarrelled! They were such good friends always; and Rose and I want them to marry one another so very much."

"Indeed! you settle matters very quickly. I dare say they have not quarrelled."

"Oh! there are Cousin Chatham and Rose coming quite slowly. And there is the post-bag, Mamma: may I take Miss Burton her letters?"

Lady Georgiana opened the post-bag, which the footman brought in, and speedily gave Violet a letter for Anna. The child flew with it to Anna's room.

"There is a letter from your sister, Miss Burton; I know her handwriting and the post-mark. Do not quarrel and be angry with poor Cousin Chatham, if you please, for I know he loves you very much."

Anna stooped to kiss the child, and brush off a tear; then whispering, "Run away now, dear, I must read my letter," was again alone.

She opened Jessie's letter, and read it. Signs

of impatience were occasionally manifested as she came upon the following passages :—

"And now, my dearest sister, let me tell you candidly what I think of your daily intercourse with Captain Michelson. It is most dangerous for you, and must require all your care and caution to prevent disagreeable results. It was, to say the least, selfish in him to subject you to this annoyance. Pray do not allow your feelings to get the better of your reason and common sense. Remember, that whatever Captain Michelson may say, or however much he may work upon your feelings, he cannot marry whilst his father is against his doing so. Even if he were, as you once suggested, to brave his father's anger, reduce his private expenditure, and marry you upon his own pay, what would be the consequences? For your own sake, as well as his, do not allow him to think of such a thing. If it is right that you should become his wife, circumstances will be so arranged by Divine Providence as to lead to that event: if not, I trust in God you may be strengthened to bear disappointment: but, oh! pray to be kept from doing yourself, and helping another to do, what is not right, and may lead to misery. Do not be angry at this sermon. I am so anxious about you, darling Anna. I know the temptation. I feel so much for you.

If we had a mother to advise and take care of us, it might be easier for us to avoid temptations; but left to ourselves, we must pray for guidance from above, and hold fast by one another. Even candour may keep us from some harm. I wish I were near you, to give you such advice and support as I am capable of, in this, for you, trying time. Endeavour not to let ambition, or a desire to emancipate yourself from your present duties, overcome your prudence. It is the first step that misleads. I can only commit you, as I do almost hourly, to the care of One who is the Father of the fatherless, and entreat you to give yourself up, with infantine humility, to His direction."

Anna read the preceding extract more than once before she put the letter down; then murmured—

"She does not know what it is to love, or she would not write thus of prudence and reason. I feel that I would marry him tomorrow, if he would run the risk: I could beg or starve with him. But selfish and calculating as he is, he will give up nothing for me. Many captains marry. Pshaw! he might marry if he choose. I will not see him again, for he is simply amusing himself with me,—with me! flirting, probably, with me! And Lady Georgiana suspects it, I am sure. How glad I am that I never—no never—told him that I loved him!

I would rather put an end to my existence than let him suppose I care more for him than he does for me. Yes, I am almost sure he is trifling with me. As Jessie says, he had no right to come here, unless he could marry me. I will not speak to him again —or I will be colder than ice—or I will torment him by flirting with that odious Lewis Gwynne that the Countess wants me to marry,—or—or—I will just tell him calmly that I do not care for him; and so have the satisfaction of mortifying him, at least." And with this laudable resolution Anna burst into tears.

I suppose it is needless to say that Anna was most unjust. Captain Michelson was as honourable in his intentions towards her, as he was undisguised in his attentions; but he had, as yet, self-command enough not to plunge himself and her into a labyrinth of difficulties, by marrying, before he could support her. He knew that he had rushed a great deal too far already; and the worst part of it was, that he would not, willingly, withdraw a step. He was, in short, as desperately smitten as even Anna could have wished.

Whilst Anna is aggravating her own feelings in the way we have described, the following conversation is going on between Chatham and the Lady Georgiana:—

"Have you offended Miss Burton, Chatham?" asked the latter. "I thought she looked annoyed, and it is unusual for her to arrive unescorted."

"Upon my word, Aunt Georgy, I do not know. Ladies are so odd—you are all so odd."

"Will you forgive my putting a home question, Chatham? You are very much struck with Miss Burton—that I see: why do you pay her such constant attention?"

"You answer your question before you ask it, Aunt: I suppose, because I am struck with her."

"But, Chatham, is it quite right in you to devote yourself to her? Will it not raise notions that must be disappointed?"

"I hope not: I assure you I have no such intention. I have too great a respect for her and her family."

"Did you know her before she came here as intimately as you seem to do now?"

"We had been acquainted about a month; quite long enough to know most young ladies. I find three days sufficient, generally; but I must honestly confess I do not know Miss Annabella Burton yet."

"You like her, I should imagine?"

"Certainly: could any one avoid liking a handsome and agreeable young lady? You like her yourself; my grandmother likes her; the children

like her; the servants like her; and assuredly Gwynne likes her. I hate singularity, so of course I like her too."

"You are never serious, Chatham; this is not altogether a matter for jesting."

"I am not jesting, upon my honour: I candidly say, I like her: what would you have more?"

"What would *you* have more, Chatham, is the question?"

"Why—let me consider,—I suppose, that she should like me: that is the next desirable point to be gained, is it not?"

"But if she were to like you too well?"

"Impossible: unless, indeed, you say, 'Not wisely, but too well,' which would be unpolite on your part." Chatham spoke with assumed carelessness, but it was evident to his aunt that he was troubled at heart, and knew not how to answer her. She continued with increased gravity—

"My dear Chatham, will you allow me to presume on two things?—first, on my being your aunt; and second, on my being, to a certain extent, Miss Burton's guardian and *chaperon*."

"Speak freely to me, Aunt. I really want some one to talk to who will advise me disinterestedly: not that I ever follow anybody's advice—you must understand that before we begin."

"Then allow me to say that, sorry as I should be to lose you, I think, the sooner you rejoin your regiment the better."

"A very cool way of telling your dearly beloved nephew that you want to get rid of him."

"For Miss Burton's sake, if not for your own."

"For mine much more than hers: I assure you, I am the most vulnerable of mortals: unlike my military predecessor, Achilles, my heels are the only invulnerable part. I never take to my heels, but face the enemy—fight it out, my dearest Aunt."

"That is wiser in war than love, Chatham."

"*Au contraire:* all violent passions are alike; give them free vent, and you get rid of them; bottle them up, and they get rid of you. I give you an example:—I am a bottle; love is the champagne. Let off the cork discreetly, out sparkles the champagne,—it leaves the bottle by degrees; keep the cork in too long, it bursts the bottle,—pop! we die together, Love and I, champagne and bottle."

"But seriously, Chatham."

"Seriously, Aunt. You mean to infer that I am in love with Miss Burton, and she with me; or mutual. Quite true, as regards your humble servant—doubtful as regards the young lady. There! I have made a clean breast of it; now I will anti-

cipate all you have to say. My father will never consent: cut me off with a penny, or less—no penny at all. I know that; he has told me so already. My most excellent grandmother and charming aunt will highly disapprove, and bring forward frequent and numerous most convincing arguments to show the folly of my proceedings—my own small stock of prudence will rise up against me—and I shall be condemned on all sides. But now I must inform you that the young lady herself is the only influential opponent. She distinctly refuses to engage herself to me, either covertly or openly,—as far as I can understand, upon pride and principle both; and seeing little probability of matters mending, she suggests the propriety of immediate separation. I tell you this, that you may understand Miss Burton's conduct, and exculpate her from any designs on your graceless nephew. For my own part, I do not care who knows that I am sincerely attached to her, and would marry her tomorrow if I were not afraid of my father—that is to say, if she would have me."

"And the separation, Chatham?" asked the Lady Georgiana anxiously.

"I shall be compelled to part from you all, my dear Aunt, tomorrow, unless you can get Dr. Jones to write me a sick certificate. I have been doing

my best to sham illness, and I tell you honestly, that I should either have broken my leg or painted myself red for scarlatina this very evening, if Miss Burton had been more encouraging. As it is, I suppose I must go."

Chatham's gaiety was fairly ended, when he came to the "I suppose I must go," and his face assumed an expression of such real pain and sorrow, that his aunt went up to him, and put her hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"My dear Chatham, are you really so much distressed?" she asked.

"My dear Aunt, we all have our little private feelings, and it is long since I have known the real kindness of relations. I am pained at bidding you all farewell."

"But we should always be glad to see you: why not come oftener?"

"The truth is, that when one is fairly in the world, and surrounded by its pleasures, one does not know how to get away from it. *Vogue la galère:* I shall be in it again tomorrow, heart and soul, I dare say, and forget all the good I have gained in this quiet place."

"Chatham, how volatile you are! Can you never be serious five minutes at a time?"

"Ten, if you please, my dear Aunt: and I never

felt more serious in my life. If I keep in my present mind, I shall be like that famous king in English history—Henry the Second, I think it was—who never smiled after his son was drowned. I only hope I shall not come to such an untimely end: I believe he died of eating lampreys."

"You make one laugh in spite of oneself, Chatham. There is one consolation in the matter: you will never die of a broken heart."

"Do not be too sure of that; just feel mine at this moment. It will, at least, prove to you the unsoundness of the fable that all lovers lose their hearts."

Lady Georgiana placed her hand on her nephew's side, and started back when the rapid pulsation of his heart seemed to strike away the hand that would have restrained it.

"My dearest Chatham, what is the matter?" she exclaimed, much alarmed.

"It is always so when I am excited," was the reply; "Miss Burton will have to answer for it, I suppose, for she is decidedly its innocent cause on the present occasion. But pray do not look so terrified. I am simply a sentimental young man, and subject to occasional palpitations. Does not that sound romantic? Now I am going to make myself fascinating, for a last *coup de main* on the

obdurate fair one;" and thus speaking Chatham hastened from the room, looking very pale, and having succeeded in alarming the Lady Georgiana very much.

Shortly after the family party met at tea. The Countess was the only one of the elder branches who spoke or seemed as usual. They talked of Chatham's departure on the morrow, of which Anna had been previously apprised by him, and which had led to the conversation on the seashore. Chatham was grave and thoughtful, except when he occasionally exerted himself into unnatural sallies of gaiety; and Anna reserved and silent. The Lady Georgiana looked uneasily from one to the other, but read nothing in Anna's countenance but an increased degree of *hauteur*. She was angry with herself for feeling, for the first time, displeased with the beauty and grace of which she had before been an admirer. She wished however not to make known by her manner to Anna that she had become acquainted with Chatham's secret; and the effort to appear herself threw a restraint over her, which plainly indicated to Anna that she at least suspected it. This made Anna even colder and more distant to Chatham than she otherwise would have been.

The pair who were really sincerely and disinter-

estedly attached to each other, parted that night with a cold touch of the fingers, which, whilst it almost broke their hearts, conveyed a lie; since it told to each of the carelessness and worldliness of the other, whilst, in truth, the affection and devotion of both had never been so fervent. God only knows how often loves and friendships have been severed for ever by the chill, loose grasp of the hand after some slight misunderstanding. The parting succeeds to the touch, cold and heartless, and the friends who, a few hours before, thought that they were firm as a rock, are perhaps divided as the rock by the earthquake, never again to be united.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness on the brain."

COLERIDGE.

THE following morning Chatham left at daybreak. He was to meet the London mail at some distance, and was obliged to start early. His aunt was the only person up to see him off, at least the only one downstairs. He had gone to his grandmother's room, at her request, to bid her farewell, and, in passing, had run into his little cousins' sleeping apartments to give them a kiss, as they lay, unconscious, on their pillows. He had fancied that he heard sounds as of some one moving as he passed Anna's room, but dared not hope she had risen to see him again at that early hour. Whilst swallowing, at his aunt's request, a cup of coffee, he said, "Do not, for my sake, allow what I have told you

to influence your manner towards Miss Burton. She would be miserable if coldly treated; indeed I am persuaded would not remain with you a day. If there is fault anywhere, it is on my side. She has always been prudent. She will probably be glad when I am gone, as I feel that I have tormented her by proposing things that could never take place. I am the most unlucky fellow in existence. If I could only have fallen in love with Miss Erskine, I might have been perhaps——but never mind. Human Nature has her own ways of teasing herself, and one of them is never to let her own flesh and blood fall in love with the desirable person. And now, God bless you! Write to me; and if you would only tell me if Miss Burton is well, or seems to care about my leaving, or—"

"I will not promise even to name her, Chatham, so you must not expect it."

Chatham kissed his aunt, feigned to have left something upstairs, for the purpose of passing once more the door of her he longed to see; muttered "Fool that I am!" to himself; returned to the drawing-room, kissed his aunt again, looked up the staircase, as if expecting to see an apparition when he re-entered the hall, and, finally, found himself in his aunt's open carriage. He kissed his hand to her as the coachman drove off, and on

passing a certain bedroom window gazed earnestly up at it, and again kissed his hand. When he did so however he little thought that there was a tearful eye and an anxious face looking upon him from behind the half-closed window-curtains. Anna was up and dressed. She perceived the wave of the hand, and fearing that Chatham had seen her, hastily withdrew. The movement revealed a portion of her dress and hand to him, and he had the somewhat melancholy satisfaction of knowing that she must at least have been thinking of him.

From this time there was a change at Plas Ayron. Strange it is that love and lovers invariably bring changes. If it and they are happy, they are so engrossed in each other, that everybody else is weary of them and wishing them fairly married and out of the way; if unhappy, they cast a gloom over the rest of the inmates of the house they are in, and an outer darkness over themselves. Thus Anna, being out of spirits herself, no longer enlivened her friends and pupils with the airy cheerfulness that had before characterized her. By fits and starts she was excited, and apparently gay, always striving to appear so, and by striving, only making her melancholy more apparent. She even flirted desperately with Lewis Gwynne, and almost contrived to convince the Countess that she liked

him; until, to the surprise of everybody, he proposed, and received, to his own astonishment and indignation, a decided refusal. In vain the Countess pleaded the eligibility of the match, the living in prospect, the pleasure of having Anna for a neighbour: she only excited the ill-suppressed wrath of Anna, who, majestically waving her hand, inquired whether her ladyship really thought that she would marry a curate, and settle for life in a country parsonage; or worse, in a lodging in a farm-house? So magnificent was she, that she quite put down the excellent Countess, who began to suspect there must be some truth in her daughter's view of the case. This conviction however only made her kinder than ever to Anna. That sacrifice of one dear daughter on the altar of Mammon, and her love for that daughter's son, kept her feelings acutely sensitive on all matters of the heart. She would rather have seen a runaway match between the pair, and poverty afterwards, than the splendid misery of riches without love.

The Lady Georgiana did her best to show no change of manner to Anna. There was however a change: scarcely a stiffness, scarcely a coolness, but a shade of distance and haughtiness that would have been imperceptible in any one less free from pride, both by nature and self-discipline, than she

was. Anna perceived it, and grew reserved, and ten times as haughty in return.

In the course of some months it was evident that her health was failing, as well as her spirits. She required excitement, and with Chatham had disappeared all that was excitable. The monotony of her life began to weary her; she longed for home, for change: she sighed for Jessie and her sisterly love and counsel; she felt that she could not get on without it. Even if she did not follow her advice, still she desired it *vivâ voce*, and wished to be able to give vent to her suppressed feelings. We have long known that she had no self-restraint except that engendered by pride, and knew nothing of self-discipline. She thought she would broach the subject to the Lady Georgiana; but then she remembered having refused Christmas holidays, upon the plea of preferring them in the summer; she remembered also that she had no money. How the forty pounds she had received for her first half-year's salary had gone she did not know. She had sent innumerable presents home, and had paid wonderful sums for carriage, in spite of Jessie's remonstrances. She had given untold shillings and half-crowns to troops of Irish beggars, who regularly beset her in her walks; she had feed every servant in the house at various

times, and in return for various kindnesses; she had lavished silver on every pretty peasant-girl or curly-headed child that pleased her fancy; in short, she had spent or given away her money, without, as the saying is, "having anything to show for it." True, she possessed a few more dresses, some of which the Countess had given her; had added to her store of amusing books, and finally, had bought of an Italian organ-boy two guinea-pigs. These, her only stock-in-trade, had multiplied so alarmingly that the gardener foretold a famine in carrots, the cook in bread, and the coachman in oats, to each of which worthies Anna and the children had recourse for food, as opportunity offered.

One day the Lady Georgiana had taken the children for a drive: Anna, pleading headache, did not accompany them. The Countess sent for her, and they had, what she liked now better than anything else at Plas Ayron, a *tête-à-tête*. The Countess was genuinely fond of her, and, with true Irish warmth of heart, always tried to make her happy. She won her to talk unreservedly to her of all but of Chatham. They were not often alone together, and now Anna felt as if she had a great deal to say, if she could only summon courage to say it.

It was rather a cold autumn day, and the Coun-

cess was seated by a fire. One of the children's low stools was near her, and Anna had placed herself upon it, so that she was occasionally obliged to raise her face to her companion; and sometimes, when confused, she bent it over her lap. The picture was a pretty one:—dignified age, and graceful, grateful youth.

"I am quite sure you are not well," said the Countess, "and I wish you would tell me what is the matter with you."

Anna could have answered, "Who can minister to a mind diseased?" but she simply replied "that she really did not know what was the matter with her, but she sometimes felt tired and languid and unfit for her duties."

"I think a little port-wine and bark might set you up."

"Medicine never does me any good; and I am worse than a baby in taking it. I should, perhaps, force myself to swallow it twice, and then throw it away."

"That would be a bad example for your pupils; they are not too strong-minded in that matter."

"Oh! I fear, my dear Madam, that I am not a fitting example for them, just now, in many ways. I do not struggle against my weakness—I cannot, as some can, teach when I have a violent headache.

I feel my patience vanish when my spirits are not good. I am not fit to be a governess."

Anna was very despondent. Everything connected with her had suddenly put on a mourning robe: the very sun wore black in her sight.

"You are nervous, I think," said the Countess kindly, "and teaching is irksome to every one under those circumstances. Perhaps change of air would do you good."

"Yes, yes; if I could go home! My sister would cure me—she always does; I am sure I should be well at Fairfield."

"I dare say it would not be difficult for you to go home for a time: my daughter would have no objection, and the children would not be the worse for a holiday."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" exclaimed Anna, clasping the Countess's hand and looking up at her brightly. But her countenance suddenly fell: she remembered her money difficulties.

"Some obstacle?" inquired the Countess. "Will you not confide in me? I am sincerely your friend, and might assist you with advice."

"I could not afford the journey," murmured Anna; "I have no money."

"What! you surely—" the Countess paused, not liking to intrude further into the secrets of Anna's account-book.

"I am so foolish—so extravagant—so careless! I know it: and I deserve to suffer. Whilst Jessie is studying to save for every one, I save for no one, and do no good."

Anna hid her face on her lap, and her long curls fell over it. She was not in the habit of making confessions to any one but her sister, and the words she had uttered slipped from her unawares. Neither was the Countess a demonstrative person, usually; but Anna's emotion caused her, for the first time, to lay her hand on her head, half caressingly, half soothingly. The unexpected kindness caused Anna to look up into the Countess's face, and then to seize the gentle hand and imprint a very affectionate kiss upon it. Trifling as the action of each to the other seems, it had a strange effect. The slight, familiar touch of the Countess, who was generally dignified in her courtesy, opened the springs of Anna's loving heart, melted its pride, and made it ready to confess faults and failings, nay, even little weaknesses, more difficult to acknowledge than glaring defects: whilst the warm kiss of gratitude, and the bright, affectionate glance of the young girl, aroused almost maternal feelings in the breast of the Countess. A sudden recollection of her own beautiful daughter, who had, years ago, once sat at her feet, half broken-hearted, after

having given up an engagement at her request, flashed upon her, and brought the tears to her eyes. Hers had been a look of anguish, not of gratitude: how much dearer the eyes that now met hers! She thought of that daughter's son, and of his yielding, loving nature, so like his mother's. She longed to make him happy, and to atone to him for the wrong she had done his mother. Thoughts of the "how and when" came into her mind; and as they came, again the kindly hand stroked the black locks of the wondering Annabella.

"If you go home for a holiday and a change of air," said the Countess, "you will promise to return to us? We cannot afford to lose you."

"Oh, yes! yes!" exclaimed Anna, "I would not leave you for the world."

"You must remember this promise, or my daughter will not readily forgive my helping to send you away from us. And as to the dear children, they would be miserable without you."

Anna thought, for the moment, that she should be equally miserable without them, and she said so.

Just at this part of the conversation the carriage wheels were heard at a distance. The Countess rose from her seat, and went to an escritoire, from which she took a well-filled purse.

"You have done your best to amuse and please me," she said, "and that, I know, disinterestedly, because, at first, you rather feared and shunned me: I should like to please you. Will you allow me to defray the expenses of your journey to and from this place? You must bring back health and spirits in return."

She let the purse fall gently into Anna's lap, and stooping over her, pressed her lips upon her forehead.

"Now, go to your room, and I will speak to my daughter about it. When we meet again it will all be settled."

With a vain effort to utter the words, "I do not deserve it," Anna was gently impelled from the room by the Countess, and shortly succeeded therein by the Lady Georgiana.

The Countess soon made known to her daughter Anna's wishes, and her own promise of seconding them.

"I think it the wisest plan possible," said the Lady Georgiana, "and she has, undoubtedly, well earned her holiday. The children have done very well, particularly before Chatham came; and I can keep them at their lessons a little daily. I only wish Chatham had never come here: nothing has gone smoothly since he left."

"Do you not think, my love, that your manner has changed towards Miss Burton?"

"Not knowingly. I intend to be the same; but it is impossible to feel open with a person who, you know, holds a secret which is no secret to you, and which both are equally tenacious of guarding."

"Would it not be better to come to a clear understanding with her?"

"Oh! not for worlds! I would not have her suppose that I thought it even possible that there could have ever been anything serious between her and Chatham."

"And why?"

"The disparity of their conditions—our own relative positions—his father's opposition—how can you ask why, my dear Mother? The very notion is too absurd. Under no circumstances could such a marriage take place."

"You do not practise your own precepts, Georgiana. I own that there are insuperable obstacles at present, but not those you name. I have often heard you calmly and trustingly discuss the shortness of life, and the folly of the minute distinctions of rank that run away with so much real happiness. This was all in the abstract then; you have not learnt to bring it home. I, who am soon going

out of this world, into that where the 'poor of spirit' reign, have only just begun to realize the fact; so it is no wonder you have yet to learn it. We are slow to perceive the truth that God is no respecter of persons, and that we shall be sternly questioned of our pride of heart. He knows that I shall have much to answer for; I pray not to add to the long catalogue."

The Lady Georgiana blushed. She was a Christian woman, but, as her mother said, had not yet strength sufficient to put in practice her own theory. She had much of the leaven of this world clinging about her; who has not? She took the Countess's hand tenderly, and said—

"Dearest Mother, I do not think we need dispute this point. You yourself own that there are insuperable obstacles in this very disagreeable affair; and, until these are surmounted, we must let it rest. When that happens, we can talk it over again. I dare say both Chatham and Miss Burton will console themselves; they are not constant enough to die of broken hearts."

"Constancy is too beautiful a thing to jest upon, my love. Wherever I have seen it I have observed great strength of character and depth of feeling; and even in the bad it elevates and refines. I hope, for his own sake, Chatham may possess it.

I should esteem, if I could not love him, all the more for it. Sometimes very volatile people *are* constant."

"Not often, I fear, my dear Mother; and in the present instance I must be allowed to separate my hopes from yours."

The Countess rose, and, pointing solemnly upwards, said, "Oh! let not pride divide our hopes; but let them soar together, bearing one another up to that heaven which we can only enter through the merits of One whose perfect life taught us the very essence of humility."

The Lady Georgiana embraced her mother tenderly, and said she would go at once and tell Miss Burton that she could leave whenever she liked. She went accordingly; and her manner was so much more cordial to Anna than it had been for some time past, that she began to think the Fates were weaving some especial web in her favour. She did not venture to put Chatham in as one of the threads, because she felt assured that he was independent of the smiles or frowns of the inmates of Plas Ayron; but she hoped that some favourable change connected with him had taken place. By-and-by, however, she made up her mind that the said change was occasioned by a knowledge obtained, she did not pretend to under-

stand how, that Chatham had quite given her up. This suggestion of some evil fairy took such strong possession of her mind, that it rooted up much of the pleasure implanted by the Countess, and cast her again on her reserve and dignity.

She resolved to set off in a day or two for home. Once having obtained permission to depart, she could not rest until she was fairly off. She and her little pupils, assisted by their maid, worked night and day at preparations, and her clothes were ready and her boxes packed in a singularly short space of time. Never before had she anticipated holidays with such nervous excitement, —never felt the restless anxiety and longing for home that she now did. Always a spoilt child, always fretting under restraint, it seemed to her as if the last nine months of teaching had been insupportable, and she longed for perfect liberty as if she had been an imprisoned bird, instead of one allowed to fly at ease through pleasant aviaries, subject only to a slight guardianship. Poor Anna! like all those who allow passion or feeling to master their prudence and common sense, she made herself miserable without due cause, and suffered more, perhaps, from imaginary evils, than many a better-regulated mind might have done from real ones.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Had he seen *thee*, when he swore
He would love but *me* alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee, who art best,
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest."

MRS. BARRETT BROWNING.

AGAIN we return to Fairfield, and meet with a cheerful group of old friends. It is the afternoon of a bright autumn day, and the sun is looking good-humouredly down upon the big pigeon-house and surrounding apple-trees. Around the said pigeon-house—a great, round building, with holes in the top—innumerable pigeons are flying, and making wonderful gyrations, as they pop in and out of the little square doors belonging to their private apartments. Beneath the said apple-trees, great heaps of apples of every variety of size and colour are lying; good Somersetshire apples, making a virtue of necessity, and patiently awaiting the hour when they shall be ground and squeezed

into must, and yield up their very heart's blood, for vicious people to drink at some future day. There are small, sour-looking jaseys, dressed in the very green and yellow of jealousy, reposing face to face with the little red-streaked bitter-sweet—that compound of the prime elements of life and human nature. Overpowering the rest, both in size and hue, are all the red-faced, bloated Tom Puts, that have been rescued from the innumerable puddings and dumplings already consumed by gormandizing human appetite; and, disputing precedence with these fat, florid country gentlemen, are the sleeker and genteeler John Days, of smoother and somewhat paler cheek. Peeping out at every niche are the cheerful-looking red-streaks, bearing resemblance to the autumnal sky now overshadowing them; and daintily resting here and there, as if heartily ashamed of their company, are a few stray pippins, golden as the dawn, or ruddy as the sunset, heedlessly swept away with the ruder crew. Despising equally the society into which a hapless fate has cast them, and wondering, as men and women often wonder under similar circumstances, how they got there, are a few choice nonpareils, whose very name seems an antidote to vulgarity; and not far from these delicate and aristocratic dames are the scarcely less

choice, but more hardy-looking russets,—gentlemen of birth and some education, strong health and long life,—but cast, like the nonpareils, by adverse fate, into company of an inferior grade to their own, and about shortly to be thrown into the jaws of that devouring monster within the pigeon-house, now sacrificing thousands of their race to his greed.

And, glancing occasionally with pitiless eye upon them, nay, actually looking on whilst the process of destruction is proceeding, is the usually merciful Jessie Burton. She even remarks upon their condition, and takes no measures to alleviate it.

"Uncle James, look here," she says, picking up a reluctant nonpareil, "what will you say to this?"

"Shame! shame!" exclaims Uncle James, seizing the unfortunate apple, and inflicting a wound upon it with grinders even more cruel, because slower in their work, than those of the apple-mill. "You ought to see that not one good keeping-apple, or famous eating-apple, is swept up with the rest."

"But we have such a plentiful crop this year, Uncle, that we have all become careless."

"You will make a fortune by cider alone, girl. What do you think, Joe?"

"Vamous, Master, vamous," said the old farm

servant, who stood by; "just step here and zee the zider."

"Here come the Captain, Nelson, and Pynsent," said Aunt Betsey, moving up the orchard towards the gentlemen she announced, whilst Uncle James and Jessie, with a blush on her face, entered the pigeon-house.

The ground-floor of this building contained the large cider-mill, now worked by some four lusty men;—in those days machinery and horses had not begun to take the bread out of the labourers' mouths;—and round about the troughs into which the cider was dropping from the reed above them, several children were kneeling, doubtfully occupied.

"You young thieves and vagabonds!" cried Uncle James in a thundering voice, "I'll have you all put into the stocks this very minute; this is the way our cider disappears, and we poor farmers are out of pocket at the end of the year. It was only ten minutes ago I routed you away from the apples, and here you are, tippling and getting tipsy in the cider-house." And here commenced a game that it was good to see.

The children, who were engaged in drawing the sweet cider into their mouths through the tubes of reeds, and who knew Uncle James very well, suddenly threw down their singular drinking cups,

and ran to the other side of the mill. Uncle James, in violent assumed wrath, pursued them: and the urchins, who enjoyed the fun, dodged him round the mill, shrieking with laughter. Jessie could not be an unconcerned spectator of the play, but joined in it, by intercepting a child here and there, and placing him within arm's reach of her uncle, who, when he fancied he had just caught him, would find Jessie ready to lend a hand on the other side, and aid his escape. The men and their windlasses were at a stand-still, for it was impossible to help looking on; whilst Uncle James puffed round the mill, now butting forward, and then suddenly turning short round upon some child, who, bolder than the rest, had ventured close behind him.

At last Uncle James fairly caught one of them, and holding him firmly with one hand, sat down leisurely on a corner of the machine, took out his handkerchief, and began to wipe his face with the other.

"Now, you young vagabond," he said, stopping at intervals to recover his breath, "I've caught you. I'm going to put you in prison and make an example of you. You'll get no more apples and cider; they'll work you to death; you shall go to the tread-mill, not the cider-mill, you little villain.

Here's Miss Burton coming to hold you fast whilst I bind you with my handkerchief. There she is, do you see?"

The child looked through the large doors into the orchard, and saw that Aunt Betsey was approaching, followed by some gentlemen. He now began to struggle for freedom in good earnest; for he, as well as the rest of his compeers, held Aunt Betsey in extreme awe, as the grandest and most particular lady in the universe. As he could not, however, hold her in greater awe than did Uncle James, he had only to struggle until she suddenly walked into the mill, a step that Uncle James little expected, and an honour rarely conferred.

"There, I'll catch you again by-and-by," said the good farmer, letting the boy go, and rising with great perturbation; for Aunt Betsey must have seen him in durance vile.

"Sad little thieves, Ma'am, drinking all the cider," he continued. "Ah, Cap'en, good day; I wish you'd been here to punish those young topers: and the young Cap'en, too; how d'ye do, Master Nelson? I'm in two minds about shaking hands with you: you've never been to see me since you came back from Scotland, near two months ago. New friends against old ones, eh?"

"Don't say that," cried the Captain; "Nelson

is a good boy in the main, and he has been waiting for his lazy old father."

"No need to make excuses, Cap'en. Where there's a will there's a way: and I dare say if I had a pretty niece or two living with me, he'd find out the old barn often enough."

Here Uncle James winked at the Captain, and then at Jessie, and the Captain nodded approvingly. Fortunately for Jessie, she was at the other side of the mill, whither Nelson walked, who had seen the knowing wink, and seen it with less annoyance than usual.

"I wonder whether you remember when we used to drink cider through reeds, Jessie?" he asked, as he took one up in his hand.

"Very well," replied Jessie, "but I dare say you could not do it now."

"There's a challenge, Nel," said Pynsent; "let us see whether you or I could perform best;" and he knelt down by the trough, and began to give very hearty pulls at the reed, inhaling thereby the sweet liquid. Nelson evidently thought the operation undignified, and refrained from following his example; whilst Jessie, who had lost much of her old freedom with Nelson, did not repeat the challenge, contented for the moment with the fact that he had again alluded to old times.

"I remember that you were anxious to carry a few hogsheads with you to India," she said; "did you ever wish for them when there?"

"Indeed I did; I should often have been thankful for a can of old 'Zummerzet' on many a broiling march. By the bye, Jessie, you have never yet had the tiger-skins I brought you; they are waiting your acceptance at home now. I will bring them down."

"I don't think Mr. Skinner would approve of that," said Pynsent; "I know I should not, if I were he."

Jessie laughed, and Nelson asked what Pynsent meant.

"Only that if Jessie is not already engaged to Mr. Skinner—soon expected to write himself Sir Jedediah Skinner, Bart.,—she soon will be: and a capital match, I can tell you. I expect him to cancel the mortgages, and free Fairfield. What an invaluable brother-in-law! As heir and head of the family, I am decidedly for the match. I shall 'throw physic to the dogs,' and live on my estate, and on my sister and brother Skinner. I hope, Jessie, you will keep better cheese and fresher biscuits."

"Ah! what a pattern Jessie is!" broke in the admiring Captain, addressing with his eyes Uncle

James, and with his heart his son Nelson: "to pay off another hundred this year again, and injure nobody!"

"You are unjust, Captain Burford," said Pynsent; "you know I helped: you never give me any credit. I put the whole of that blessed ten-pound Bank of England, that the strange gentleman at the inn gave me, for curing his spasms—"

"*Alias* giving him peppermint water and ammonia for palpitation of the heart, caused by eating too much cheese after dinner," said Jessie.

"He called me a very clever young practitioner, Miss Impudence; and gave me his card, in case of my ever practising in London."

"By the way, Nevy, how is old Molly?" inquired Uncle James.

"Now, Uncle, that reminds me: if you ever send for me on any of those old women's errands again, I won't go. I rode two good miles out of my way, through the wood: I saw Molly: very ill she was, to all appearance. I left her a dose of innocent medicine, that I took with me, that could do no harm if it did no good. I went again with more medicine. 'Dear heart! I'm a sight better,' said she. I did not see much change myself. I went a third time, when I thought she must have taken all the medicine, and carried more in my

pocket; together with some warm flannel garment or other from Jessie, for her rheumatism. She was gone out, so I went into the house, and waited her return. I amused myself by looking at the backs of three old books on the shelf. Took them down, and lo! behind them were my two bottles of medicine, untouched, and the corks undrawn. I sat down in righteous wrath with the bottles before me. Molly soon came hobbling in, with an apronful of something. I was too indignant to speak, but pointed to the bottles. 'Lord bless you, Master Pynsent!—I ax your pardon, Dr. Pynsent—but I war told of a zarten cure, and I just tried it vurst.' 'What was it?' I asked. 'Pobble broth, Doctor.' 'What the deuce is that?' said I: I could have sworn with all my heart. 'Pobble broth is pobbles boiled in water; and then you drinks the liquor.' I requested further information, as calmly as I could. 'There be a vamous zpring down a mile in the wood, as runs over thizen zort o' pobbles: they be good for the rheumatiz, I was told. I had zome vetched, and boiled 'em. I velt better a'most directly. I tried 'em again, and in a day or two was able to go and vetch 'em: and now I be a'most total cured.' 'I'm glad to hear it,' said I; 'then you don't want this;' and I drew forth the flannel article. I took up the bottles, and poked

them and the flannel into my pocket again, and walked away, to where I had tied up my horse. 'Lord bless you, Doctor,' screamed Molly, 'if you knowed how I zuffers in my back and arms.' 'Take plenty of pobble broth,' cried I, and rode away."

"And the flannel jacket?" said Jessie, laughing heartily.

"I relented when I met her grandson, and sent it back to her, recommending him to tell her to dip it in the broth before she put it on. He grinned, and said, 'She's a'most crazed about that broth, Zur.' And there end my visits to Molly."

"Haw! haw! haw!" shouts Uncle James, over and above the laughter of the rest.

"You may laugh, Squire, but I will send you a bill for the medicine and attendance," said Pynsent.

"Why you had your medicine again, Nevy; and the receipt for the rheumatism may be worth thousands to you. Haw! haw! haw! I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but I can't help it. Haw! haw! haw!" and the old pigeon-house rang with laughter, which communicated itself to the men, idling over the windlasses.

Aunt Betsey looked complacently majestic, and Uncle James was satisfied. His reverence of, and fear of offending Aunt Betsey, never diminished;

whilst her sufferance of him had visibly increased since the Michelson defalcation.

"Here comes a lady-caller, Jessie," said Pynsent; "let me hide behind the door till she passes."

"Who is it?" said Jessie, looking up the orchard. "How like the walk is to Anna's! I declare, if I did not know it was impossible, I should think it was Anna."

"God forbid!" muttered the Captain involuntarily.

Jessie went outside, and in a few moments was flying rather than running up the orchard; whilst the lady took an equally sudden flight towards Jessie, and they were immediately in each other's arms.

It was, as we all know, Anna, who had purposely avoided announcing her arrival; and the confusion and various sensations she occasioned were indescribable. Perhaps the only members of the party who experienced unmixed pleasure at seeing her were Jessie, and her Uncle and Aunt. Captain Burford saw his new hopes blown away like soap-bubbles; and Nelson, at a blow, felt his new strength, that had taken him months to build up, pulled down. All personal feeling was, however, soon forgotten, in lamentations over Anna's sickly

appearance. Everybody perceived that there was something wrong somewhere, although Jessie alone knew where the blister drew. She looked pale and thin, and the rich bloom that had flushed her face when she left Fairfield, had faded into a hectic hue, that alarmed Jessie more than she liked to acknowledge, even to herself.

That night the sisters sat up late. Captain Michelson was the subject of their conversation. Anna assured Jessie that they had given each other up, and that she had come home to brush off all old recollections. The tearful glance belied her words, but Jessie strengthened her in her resolve, although she saw that pride, and not propriety, had caused her to make it. Even to her sister, Anna found it impossible to reveal the depths of her heart; but she knew that far down in its recesses lay the image of Chatham Michelson, covered and choked up by many unkind, bad feelings—that ill weed, pride, superabounding—yet never, she believed, to be quite rooted out. Still, what she most longed for was an opportunity of showing Chatham that she did not care for him. Had his father now been at her feet, she might have married him—even him—to prove to the son that others would be proud to wear the jewel he had cast off. Had some venerable earl or

duke only proposed for her, with what sumptuous delight would she have received him as a suitor! not because she wished to be a countess or a duchess—though she was ambitious of worldly rank—but to pierce Chatham's heart with the astounding intelligence. She did not tell Jessie this: she did not, at once, quite feel it herself—but a circumstance that occurred during her holidays, revealed the power of the tempter.

When she had been a few days at home, she chanced to meet Lady Mansford, who at once invited her to the park. She did not wish to go, and pleaded illness. Her Ladyship would nurse her. After frequent refusals, she consented to spend a long day with her; and went accordingly, the following week. As if by some preconcerted plan, Lady Mansford talked of nothing but the Michelsons, and their mutual friends in Wales. It was a natural subject of conversation between them, still Anna fancied there was intention in what appeared to be merely the heedless gossip of a woman of the world. Underneath the gossip there was, certainly, a desire to discover whether Anna was at all interested in the Michelsons, which Anna's careless manner entirely baffled.

"You know," said Lady Mansford, "that Mr. Michelson and his son were said to have had a

quarrel; some say about the election, others say about Miss Erskine."

"I was not aware of it," replied Anna, scarcely conscious that she was telling a falsehood.

"After the election, which, by the bye, was a shameful affair and won by bribery, Mr. Michelson went abroad, his usual place of refuge under annoyances. This last season he returned to London: I saw him frequently. He was looking remarkably well, and younger than ever. It was about the time of Captain Michelson's return from his Welsh trip. Miss Erskine was in town—you remember her—I think Captain Michelson always admired her, but did not choose to let it be seen, lest he should be supposed to be a money-hunter; but his father always wished him to propose for her."

"I thought," said Anna, "that when Captain Michelson left Wales, he intended rejoining his regiment, quartered in the north of England."

"I believe he did so; but hearing his father was in England, he got extended leave, and came to town. He was again thrown into Miss Erskine's society, and I thought matters were progressing fairly, when I was obliged to leave London."

"Ah, indeed!" said Anna, by way of saying something, whilst a pang shot through her heart.

"You know Captain Michelson must have money, in spite of his delicacy about it."

"I suppose so: his father is so poor!" said Anna satirically.

"His father, my dear! he will probably marry again, and certainly, during his life, will not do much for his son."

"Is Miss Erskine much admired?" asked Anna carelessly. "She seemed good-natured, but I never thought her pretty; and the gentlemen used rather to laugh at her."

"Oh! she is much thinner, and therefore better looking. She is reckoned very handsome in town."

"London society must have peculiar notions of beauty," said Anna, who was beginning to feel her courage, and therewith a portion of her pride and satire, rise: "she would never have struck me as even good-looking."

"Gentlemen's and ladies' beauties are always of different kinds. I think men generally like rather plump women. You know George the Fourth's 'fat, fair, and forty.'"

Lady Mansford came precisely under this class, and Miss Erskine under the two first divisions of it: whereas Anna was dark and slight.

"Certainly there is no accounting for taste," said Anna. "Are you an admirer of Miss Erskine's personal appearance, Sir Thomas?" she added, as that gentleman entered the room. He had pre-

viously greeted Anna with great kindness, and remarks on her altered looks.

"I? no!" replied he laughing: "who is? She cannot help being like a very large wax doll, because she was not the founder of her own good looks. In your presence we have no room for the admiration we sometimes bestow on dolls." Anna blushed and felt pleased, whilst Lady Mansford bit her lips.

The arrow had struck home, nevertheless, whether intentionally aimed or not. Anna left Mansford Park that night, more than ever resolved to forget Chatham Michelson, and buckled up in an armour of pride and resentment, proof against the incursions of all gentler feelings.

From that day she forced her spirits into their old channel; walked, drove, and amused herself. Every one but Jessie thought her gay as of old, but she saw the occasional depression, and guessed the cause. She, poor girl, saw also much more that it was pain and grief for her to see: Anna encouraged rather than repulsed the quiet, but too evident attentions of Nelson. The pale face and delicate appearance of Anna had made fresh impression on him. He did not allow himself vanquished, but again the reserve with Jessie and his father proved that all was not right.

As Pynsent was much occupied, Nelson frequently took Anna long drives for health's sake, accompanied, it is true, by Aunt Betsey, and sometimes by Jessie, but as dangerous for him as if he had been alone with her. He was now constantly at Fairfield, attracted by that irresistible charm that Anna possessed, and that nobody could describe. He walked with her—listened to her—gazed on her—and finally gave himself up to his love for her; or, more properly, his passion: for the pure, true love, that is the birth of friendship and esteem, and mutual confidence, he had given in his boyhood and youth. With Anna he had little in common: yet he adored her, worshiped her. He was reserved, deep-thinking, and far-seeing. Naturally an admirer of simplicity and goodness in all things: himself possessing somewhat of his father's straightforwardness of character, and hating duplicity: with strong affections for the few he could esteem, and who knew and loved him; but with no art of acquiring general admiration, or spontaneous tenderness, either from woman or man. Those few who did know him intimately, especially those who had been with him in his boyhood, and witnessed the many generous actions and fine minute traits of character, that he always tried to conceal, conceived and preserved a strong attach-

ment for him: others considered him cold and stern: some thought him even hard of heart, because his strong sense of justice frequently overcame his kinder feelings: few, if any, thought him capable of the passion of love. But there it was in his breast: burning, consuming him—as those alone are, perhaps, consumed, who are outwardly cold and reserved to the world at large. Hidden fires that find no vent are the most dangerous. Long the master of himself and of those who knew him well, he was now entirely overcome. Beauty, the subtle poison—the tempting serpent—had done the work: and yet he fully understood Anna's true character. But her very faults became beauties—there was in each something so captivating. If she said a perverse thing, it was said with a grace so peculiar, that it instantly became a talisman wherewith to draw the resisting will of others towards her: and if she said a pleasant thing, that will, then unresisting, leapt forward to meet her, as it were, before she could finish uttering the words that were on her lips.

And so, with this attractive creature Nelson was in love. Willingly or unwillingly, all about them gradually perceived it. Even Dinah, in a half-condoling, half-mirthful strain, began to talk to Jessie about Mr. Nelson and Miss Anna. But

Jessie soon caused her to cease, by a very decided disapprobation, both in face and manner, and by sending her at once away on some errand that she improvised for the occasion. Then Jessie went to her chamber, and bolted the door. Shall we intrude upon her privacy, and lay bare her feelings? Yes, we will, because such feelings are an honour to her, and an example to others.

On her knees, by her bedside—lowly—lowly! Not leaning against the bed, but with her head almost touching the ground, she pours out her grief to One who has listened to her unselfish prayers for others, for years and years. She sobs—low, smothered sobs. She cannot weep. "It is so hard! so hard! Her sister—the child of her love! She whom she has nursed, and fondled, and watched and taught, ever since their dear mother gave her to her charge on her death-bed! To come between her and her love—the one pure, hallowed love of her whole life! O God, this is too bitter a draught for pure human nature! Any one else! oh, any one else! If she could only have been so tried by another! She deserved chastisement! but oh! not through her. And that sister did not love him; she did not care for him; she could not understand him, and never, never make him happy, or he her. Oh, pain! oh, agony!" Still the low

sob, as if her heart would break. Arouse thyself, poor Jessie! These pains must be borne and overcome. She does arouse herself. She does summon to her aid the one true safeguard—she prays. She prays to be supported and taught to act aright through this great anguish, whatever may be its end: she prays to be preserved from jealousy and evil thoughts of her sister; she prays to be enabled to overcome an affection that has grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength. Long and earnestly she prays, and the sobs soften into tears, like clouds into dew. She arises, strengthened and refreshed, as all those arise who ask aright. She goes towards the open window, and lets the fresh autumn breeze play upon her falling tears, and silently, gradually, dry them up. A pair of white pigeons fly upon the window-sill; unconsciously she strokes them, and gathers a rose-bud that is thrusting its pretty lips towards her, as if to offer kisses and consolation. She looks across into her garden, and the perfumes of the flowers, the humming of the bees around their hives, the soft cooing of the pigeons, seem to steal through the vacant senses into the pre-occupied soul, and insensibly soothe and calm. "So many blessings" she murmurs, "and yet ungrateful and discontented!" A little scratching and whining at the door

—she pays no attention; louder and more imperative it grows. She opens the door. In bursts a beautiful Scotch terrier, that Nelson brought from Scotland and had given to her: it is of the real long-haired, bright, intelligent, faithful Ayrshire breed, and has the winning, attractive ways of its race, jumping, biting, gambolling, pulling at her gown—it will be, and at last is, attended to.

"Poor Sandy!" ejaculates Jessie, taking him up in her arms and again letting a tear roll down her cheek. With quick perception, and a feeling beyond instinct, Sandy licks off the tear, and rubs his long, soft hair against her face, and fixes his bright black eyes upon her, and asks, as plainly as dog can ask, what is the matter. She strokes his pretty head and smiles. He is more satisfied. She puts him down on the high window-seat upon which she has been leaning, and with one hand on his back, again looks across into her garden. "Tap, tap," at the door. "Wanted, Miss, please," says Dinah without, "directly, please Miss." "I will come," says Jessie, and goes to her ewer, pours out water, and washes her face. It is no good for her to attempt to efface the traces of tears, for there they are. With one more silent prayer for help, she leaves her room, and walks slowly down the passage, little Sandy pulling at her gown.

Just entering the front door are Nelson and Anna, who have been walking through the corn-fields. She hurries past them, hiding her face, but saying, as cheerily as she can—

"You must have your jelly now, Anna," and hastening into her pantry, she prepares a glass of clear, bright jelly, for that rival sister, who little thinks what sad tears dim her eyes as she does so.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"But if that virtue be of so great might
Which from just verdict will for nothing start,
But, to preserve inviolated right,
Oft spills the principal to save the part;
So much more then is that of power and art
That seeks to save the subject of her skill,
Yet never doth from doom of right depart;
As it is greater praise to save than spill,
And better to reform than to cut off the ill."—SPENSER.

JUST at the close of Anna's holidays, when she was thinking of returning into Wales, and dreading the prospect of beginning to teach again, Nelson proposed for her, and was accepted: yes, accepted! We will take a slight glance into their hearts. Nelson was madly in love, and he did what almost every one so desperately smitten would have done,—made an effort to win the girl who had taken hold of his affections. He looked upon his early attachment to Jessie as a brother's love for his sister; so different was it from his present frame of mind. He took it for granted that she enter-

tained similar feelings for him, or else he took nothing for granted, and did not care to think about it. He knew that no shadow of an engagement had ever existed between them save in his father's will and imagination; and that since his return from India, nothing but the mere commonplaces of friendship had passed between them. In his mind, therefore, the only drawback was his father. He resolved to try his fate with Anna first, and to tell him only if he succeeded. Having succeeded, nothing—not even his father's anger—seemed of moment to him. The only thing he tried to feel careless about was meeting Jessie. He did not know why it was, but he wished her away. This was the reigning feeling in his mind regarding her: alas, poor Jessie!

And Anna? Hers was a troubled heart. She had resolved to accept Nelson, if he proposed for her, even before he did so. She consulted no one—trusted no one—not even Jessie, because she knew that she would condemn her. She wished to prove to Chatham that she could marry well—an officer, like himself, with equally good expectations, probably better; moreover she was anxious to marry. Now Chatham had given her up, she had no wish to remain at Plas Ayron; she began to grow tired of her position of governess; she

liked the prospect of going to India,—gorgeous, warm India, where she should be as a queen, instead of in the doubtful position she now held. She would forget Chatham,—was forgetting, despising, hating him almost. She esteemed and admired Nelson, and knew, despite his reserve even with her, that he worshiped her very shadow. She liked such worship from such a proud, shy man, almost as much as the open admiration of the gay, light Chatham; she tried to think she liked it better. She thought only of herself. She forgot whether she was acting rightly by Nelson, or others who belonged to her. To do her justice, she did not know that Jessie loved Nelson. She was a child when he went away, and thought of the old story of the intended marriage as a mere jest. Since his return, whenever he had been in her society, it was evident that he had always been devoted to her; had spoken little to Jessie, and had left home when she went into Wales. She knew that his father liked Jessie best, and wished Nelson to marry her; but as that was impossible, and as there was no apparent love on Jessie's side, she saw no reason why she should not accept him. She would, in short, have done anything to feed her pride, and to annoy Chatham Michelson. She was quite resolved to keep her promise of return-

ing into Wales, and, although she dreaded the disclosure of her engagement, had a certain undefined wish to know what the Countess would think of it, and to strive to discover whether Chatham were apprised of it. She also anxiously desired to prove to the Lady Georgiana that she could marry well, although her nephew and herself might think her beneath them. With all these improper and conflicting feelings in her mind, Anna accepted Nelson, and tried to make him believe, without directly telling him so, that she did so from affection.

The intelligence was variously received by the friends of the parties. Captain Burford was so much enraged, that he declared he would never speak to his son again, never enter Fairfield whilst Anna was there, never countenance such a marriage, leave all his fortune to Jessie, who was the rightful wife for his son, and, finally, go away from home until it was all over. Although his wrath did not lead him to these extremes, it cooled into a settled displeasure. He avoided Nelson, scarcely spoke to him when they met, and when he did speak, it was with an effort to suppress a burst of passion; did not enter Fairfield, but wrote a long letter of complaints and condolence to Jessie; and set his face against the match. Pynsent was

almost as much annoyed as the Captain, and spoke so severely to Anna about her vanity in marrying for the mere sake of marrying—her heartlessness in accepting a man she did not care for, and her thoughtlessness of others who might care for him, that he roused every bad passion of her breast, and made her resolve to go through with the affair, if only to prove to Pynsent that he should not domineer over her.

Aunt Betsey and Uncle James looked rather favourably upon the match, and did not enter minutely into all its ins and outs. A wedding to them was a wedding, and they were, bachelor and old-maid-like, very glad to canvass all its details. The only one of the party who did not know what course to pursue was Jessie. Her heart was sore, but she struggled hard to prevent the wound from being known. As the roots of her affection had been planted years and years before, so they had penetrated deeply and intricately into every crevice of her nature, and it would have been impossible for her to tear them out, without throwing down the structure into which they had so curiously entwined themselves. All she could do was to hide them; to heap up earth upon them, and keep them underground; cut off all the fresh shoots, and let them creep on unknown to any one but herself.

There they were, and there they must remain until she died, and they died with her. Outwardly she was calm and composed; less cheerful, perhaps, to a loving, anxious eye, like Pynsent's, but unchanged towards Nelson and Anna. The one was too engrossed with his own selfish happiness to think much of anything else; the other was too much taken up with her own various plans, hopes, fears, and tumults, to cast a look upon Jessie.

Often did Jessie endeavour to speak to Anna upon this subject, so near her heart, and to court her to pour out her real feelings to her, but she could not do it; the words faded on her lips. She knew that Anna did not love Nelson, and she longed to entreat her to pause before she committed the crime of marrying him, and dragged both herself and him into misery; but the fear of being selfish, and of seeming to advise for her own ends, kept her silent; so she had to suffer alone, like thousands of others, and to wear a cheerful face whilst she had a hidden grief that might be softened, but never quite washed away, even by her tears.

Anna refused to come to any decision respecting the period of her marriage, until she had completed her three months in Wales. Nelson wished her not to return, but on this point she was decided.

Wilful in thought, word, and deed, no one but such a blind lover as he was, could have failed to perceive that a secret, scarcely acknowledged to herself, lay beneath her wilfulness. She had still a forlorn hope of meeting, or hearing of Chatham once more before she became another's; and therefore, after two months of home, and after sowing, partly advisedly and partly unadvisedly, the seeds of much mischief, she again left Fairfield, with renewed health, and vastly improved though still fluctuating spirits.

Soon after she was gone, Nelson went to London, and Captain Burford once more made his appearance in his own old haunts. He found Jessie alone, and soon began the subject of their mutual grievances.

"I tell you what it is, my dear girl, I never will countenance that match," he began, as he seated himself by her side. "As guardian, I can prevent her marrying until she is one-and-twenty, and, by Jove, I will."

"My dear Sir," said Jessie, "you surely would not use forcible measures. Nelson is quite old enough to know his own mind, and Anna—"

"Doesn't know her mind at all. I am not quite a fool, Jessie. She don't care a fraction for Nelson. I hope she'll make him wretched, I do,

and that they may lead a cat-and-dog life. But they shall not marry. I can prevent it for some time yet, until Nelson is obliged to sail for India, and Miss Anna will never bear a ten years' engagement. If I can only get my co-guardians to agree to my plans, and make them see things in their right light, the dickens a bit shall they ever be made one! Fore and aft not more inseparably divided."

"You do not mean what you say," said Jessie, forcing down a strange hope that she knew ought not to arise; "it must all take its course."

"I told Nelson that, as guardian, Anna was not entitled to her thousand pounds fortune till she was of age, and should not have it then if I could help it; and the impertinent scoundrel got into a passion, and said if it were twenty thousand he would not take a penny of it from her brothers and— He had the grace to stop before he said 'sister,' but I told him, pretty sharply, that you wanted to be under no obligations to him."

The colour came into Jessie's cheeks as she said, "I wish, for my sake, you would not allude to me; it can do no good, and is so very, very painful to me."

"My darling!" cried the good Captain, putting his arm round her waist, and laying her head on

his shoulder, and patting her cheek; "my pet! I would not pain you for all the gold of Ophir. I will try to hold my tongue, but you know I had set my heart upon you for my daughter-in-law, you are so well suited to Nelson; and I promised your father—ass! fool! blind, senseless oaf! I vow he is no son of mine."

Jessie put her hand upon the Captain's mouth, and threw her arms round his neck. "You must not," she said, "you must not. We cannot command our affections. It is better as it is. Look at me: I am not beautiful, or clever, or in any way accomplished. I am not intended by nature to win love, only friendship, and that Nelson has given me. He could not—who could?—resist the fascinations of Anna. Besides, I must remain at Fairfield. The old place must not go to ruin. Pynsent has his profession; Peter is away on the seas; Charles is in London, and will soon be in Italy: what would become of Fairfield without me? and Aunt Betsey, and Uncle James, and you yourself, Captain Burford? You could not have a rubber, or anything, if I were gone. I am very vain, but you know it is all quite true."

"True! ay—I know that. Blind fool! You are everything to everybody but to him, and he will know it when it is too late."

"But promise me, Captain Burford, that you will put none of your threats into execution. It makes me unhappy to hear you speak so. I shall not sleep tonight if you do not revoke your words, and I must be up early tomorrow."

"I 'll be— I beg your pardon, my darling, I was on the verge of a deuced bad oath; but what I've said I 'll stand to. If Nelson marries Anna they may go to——India, or the world's end, if they will: I never want to see either of them again."

Here Jessie's tears, long on the verge of being shed, fell in good earnest, and at the sight of them the Captain got up and fussed about the room, pished and pshawed, stamped his foot, but finally returned to put his arms round Jessie.

"I'll marry you myself, and come and live here, I'll be flogged if I don't," said he.

"That is a capital plan," said Jessie, smiling through her tears; "and then you will forgive Nelson?"

"Yes, then, and not till then: so the sooner you fix the day the better."

"I am ready now, directly; we will get Aunty to be bridesmaid, and Uncle James to give me away."

"You are a dear, good angel of a girl, but I am not an angel of a man. I was never made to break

my word by mortal yet. Old Cap'en Steadfast, the men used to call me; and now, by my own son! Job himself would never have put up with it."

"My dear Captain Burford! we were babies."

"But I was not a baby: the deuce is in it if I was; and your father wasn't a baby; and you didn't grow up babies; and Ned was no baby when he went to India first, and told me that he knew he should never see anybody he liked as well as you— There, I will hold my tongue; now don't cry: I cannot bear that. A woman's tears always floored me. 'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence, since there are no married people in heaven."

"Then it is better to die single," said Jessie archly.

"I believe it; for then, at least, you have no children to bother you. You and Pynsent are the only children I ever saw who never gave anybody any trouble; except, indeed, that wonderful Tiny, who was staying here last year; but she was an old woman in disguise,—a youthful figure-head upon an old craft."

"She is quite well," said Jessie, glad to turn the conversation, "and is already wondering what she can do to make herself useful, and earn her livelihood."

"Save us! she scarcely ten year old!"

"And I heard from Charles today, who has good hopes of getting to Italy. I will read you what he says about it. 'Uncle Timothy is for my at once setting off on my travels, and of course offers to pay my expenses; but this I could never allow. Perhaps, in the course of another year, we may be able to raise the money amongst us, as Uncle James kindly offered to assist. I am working hard; as hard, at least, as my uncle will let me, who fears for my health. I am, however, very strong, and I think less lame than I was, though I fear I shall never quite get rid of the slight limp I still have. Ladies have "Grecian bends;" why not a Grecian limp? Tiny is very well. Her drawing is wonderful, and she is wonderful. Her mother's health is bad, and she waits upon her, teaches their few scholars, works, and fags like a woman. Her countenance grows more spiritual every day. She seldom comes here, but I go to see her as often as I can. I love the child, and get more and more interested in her every day. She seems to have an innate perception of the beautiful in art that is quite incomprehensible. One of my greatest anxieties, if I leave London, will be this child. Uncle Timothy is as good to her as he can be; but he sees her seldom, and I think his housekeeper dis-

likes her and her mother. She often throws out strange hints to me about them, but I do not choose to take them, for I do not much like the woman. She is a fawning, cringing thing, without, I fear, any one's interest but her own at heart, though she professes to be devoted to my uncle. He is quite well, and overwhelmed with engagements, professional and philanthropic. I will write more about Italy soon. Meanwhile, will you try to find out what can be done in the money way? Very little would suffice me; for truly painting is meat, drink, and sleep to me.'"

"Doesn't he say anything about Nelson and Anna?" asked the Captain, as Jessie ceased reading.

"Not much; at the beginning of the letter—a few words," replied Jessie with hesitation.

"I should like to see them. There can be no secrets about them."

The Captain twisted the letter out of Jessie's hands.

"May I read it? Yes? I like to know Charles's opinions, because he is sensible, and speaks without reserve. I wish all young men would get rid of that cursed reserve: it is the bane of all social intercourse. Let me see; here it is:—'I do not like the marriage; they are not suited in habits or

disposition.'—Right, my boy, right!—'And they will both repent it before they have been married a year.'—I hope with all my soul they will, Charlie.—'No two should marry who have not some impulses in common.'—Ho! ho! you get beyond me now. What does he mean, Jessie? I believe they will be impelled to pull one another's eyes out before long. Fancy that babe, Charles, knowing anything about impulses!—'Love is too holy and heavenly a plant to be forced into all soils, and trained into all forms.'—That will do, thank you, Jessie. I am afraid I must give up Charles's sense; I believe the boy must be smitten himself. Tiny is too young, or I should be expecting 'love in a garret' soon; and oh! the impulses!"

The arrival of Uncle James, and Jessie's glad proposal of a rubber, put an end to the conversation; and the Captain was soon heard scolding Jessie in right good earnest.

"What! three honours in your own hand, and not play them; and I the fourth, and we actually lose the trick! Four by honours, and lose the odd trick! 'Pon my word, Jessie, if you do not play better, I'll teach Dinah. It is more than enough to provoke a saint. We'll change partners. I can't stand this;" and down went the pack of cards in a fury on the table, and up rose the Captain in wrath.

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared Uncle James. "Do you think I am going to take Jessie and hold four by honours, and lose the trick? Not as long as I am sure of one honour,—the honour of playing with you, Ma'am;" and he made a bow to Aunt Betsey, which she returned with dignity.

"Captain Burford, do sit down and try me once more, only this once. I assure you I will do better."

"So you have said every other evening for these twelve years. You will never play whist; nobody can who husband their trumps."

"Here is a letter for you, Jessie," said Pynsent, who was just returned from the town; "it is an Indian post-mark, and there is ever so much money to pay."

"It is from Louisa Colville; oh! I am so glad. Wait and hear, Pynsent; pray do not run away."

"There is a messenger waiting for me, who says some poor woman is dying about six miles off, and I must order my horse at once."

"Oh! she'll wait a few minutes, I dare say, Pyn," said Uncle James; "and you know she don't pay."

"I wish anybody paid," said Pynsent; "it is all work and no pay in the country; I am sick of it."

"Louisa Colville desires her kind regards to you, Pynsent, and hopes your chess-men are still unbroken; and her love to you, Uncle James. Does not your heart beat?"

"I hope so, my dear. There! I vow Pynsent is off. I never saw any one like that boy; morning, noon, and night he is at it, pay or no pay. And what does pretty Miss Colville say of India?"

"She does not like it much, and wishes herself at Fairfield. She fears there is little chance of her returning to England for some years, and complains of the artificial position of women in India."

"Pshaw!" said Captain Burford. "They all like it. That is the first bit of affectation I ever remember Miss Colville guilty of. There is not a woman in the world who does not glory in having crowds of men at her feet; and in India, where the dear creatures are in the minority, they are happy, if they are happy anywhere."

"Oh, listen, Captain Burford!" interrupted Jessie: "Louisa has actually met Peter."

"Hurrah!" shouts the Captain.

"And she says he is quite well, and so like Anna that she should have known him anywhere. Her papa and mamma liked him so much that they insisted on his staying with them as long as he was ashore, and he has promised to pay them another

visit. Poor Peter! Just hear what she says:—'We did nothing but talk of you from morning till night. He was quite as willing a listener as I was a narrator; and we canvassed Fairfield and all belonging to it as industriously as your Uncle James canvassed at the election for Mr. Michelson; but we were not quite so unfortunate as he was when he and your brother had the quarrel about voting. We all think Peter so handsome. He is a regular sailor, and very much beloved by his messmates. Of course you know that he is second lieutenant, and showed me a purse full of prize money that he had gained in taking a pirate-ship; but did not tell me of the compliment paid him on the occasion by the commander. The said prize money was all spent whilst he was on shore, partly in presents to send home and partly in presents to those about him. He strikes me as being as much like Anna in his ways as in his person. He talks of writing to you soon, and I had almost prevailed on him to begin a letter, and actually put out writing materials, when he suddenly whirled me round like a teetotum and seated me at the piano, begging my pardon in the oddest way, and assuring me that as I had been so long at Fairfield he looked upon me as belonging to him. Mamma, who is generally very particular, laughed outright,

and asked me if his brothers were like him. We both exclaimed at the very idea, assuring her that the son and heir, Dr. Pynsent Burton, was the very pink of propriety, solidity, and crossness, and would much rather twirl a pill than a young lady in a waltz. The latter simile was Peter's, who, however, to mollify it, declared that his brother was the 'best fellow in the world,' when he knew him, and he supposed he must now be super-superlative, better than the best. Oh, how we talked of you all, and longed to be together at dear, pleasant, cheerful, old-fashioned, hospitable Fairfield! With the exception of the one day on which I met my parents, I still look upon the days I passed at Fairfield as the happiest of my life. I hate India: I hate the heat, the natives, the palanquins, the mosquitoes, the finery, the helplessness, the uselessness, the—shall I say it?—the officers and all. I hope my dear Papa will not read this, for I adore him; and I love you, my dear Jessie, as much, or better, than ever; and Mamma loves you by report; as everybody——'"

Here Jessie paused.

"Go on, go on!" cried the Captain. "She is right; God bless her!—'as everybody who knows you, fools excepted, must.' I know what the end of it is."

"This is quite a white day," said Jessie. "Such

comfortable letters from Charles and Louisa, and all of us well, and, I hope, likely to do well. How thankful we ought to be!"

"Ho! ho! Mr. Pynsent," said Uncle James, "so you have been listening to the letter, after all. Pretty Miss Colville touches you up a little, but I think she has a hankering for you at bottom."

"I only returned whilst John is saddling my horse," said Pynsent slightly embarrassed.

"You shall read all the letter when you come back," said Jessie, as Pynsent again left the room.

"Pynsent is a rum chap," said Uncle James. "Anybody else would have fallen in love with that pretty girl, and they in the same house for two or three months; but he was as cool as a cowcumer."

"He is a sensible young man," said Aunt Betsey, with a glance that dumb-foundered Uncle James.

Jessie retired to rest that night with a heart so full of thankfulness that she almost forgot her one great sorrow, and very nearly succeeded in getting rid of the wicked demon of jealousy that she had been for some time combating. She wrote a long, affectionate letter to Anna, in which she uttered prayers for her happiness, joined with entreaties to her to look well into her own heart before she took the decisive step. She felt happier after she had said this, because she knew it was a duty, and she had tried to do it without selfishness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"C'est le premier pas qui coûte."

Anna arrived once more safely at Plas Ayron, and was kindly welcomed by all. From the first day of her return she had the disclosure of her intended marriage on her lips, but had not courage to bring it out. She could not even hint at her intending to leave her situation in a few months, but went on teaching as usual, and listening for news of Chatham. She received and replied to letters from Nelson almost daily, and, in various ways, as apparent to the reader as the writer, went on acting a succession of unspoken lies. Once, and once only, she heard Chatham's name mentioned by the Countess, who expressed her astonishment at not hearing from him, and her intention of writing to him.

About two months after Anna's return from her holidays, to the surprise of every one, he made his appearance. Had he dropped from the clouds, instead of walking into the drawing-room, looking

frost-bitten, one winter night, they could not have been more astonished. Anna did not faint, but she suppressed a scream, and turned very pale. As at their parting, so at their meeting,—a bow, a slight curtsey, and a chilly touch of the fingers was all the outward display of the inward feelings which were at the moment stirring the blood tumultuously around their hearts.

Chatham looked ill. There was an anxiety about his usually open, smiling face, that was painful to see. His spirits seemed depressed, and he tried in vain to rally them. He was as much changed as Anna. Towards her he was cold and distant, but her haughtiness and pride turned to timid and sorrowful shyness towards him. She felt tears frequently swelling in her eyes, and if she did meet his glance, hers sank before it, like that of a culprit before a judge. She resolved to avoid him, but her self-restraint and resolution were not sufficient for the task. She found herself in his presence whenever and wherever she could manage it without exciting observation. She never permitted herself to be a moment alone with him, but in the presence of others she thought herself secure.

He professed to have run down a few days to see his friends and to spend his Christmas with

them. One week, or thereabouts, was the extent of his visit: he must return soon after Christmas-day.

On Christmas Eve the children had a little party and Anna exerted herself to amuse them. She played and sang for them, danced with them, and helped them in their games. Chatham also joined in their sports, and thus he and Anna were thrown rather more together than they had been before. She looked very well. She had dressed herself with care, and, forgetful of Nelson, sought only how she could charm Captain Michelson into his old admiration of her beauty. She knew that Chatham was looking at her; she felt that his rigid mouth relaxed into a smile when they were near each other; she ventured to glance at him. Their eyes met, and who could withstand the soft yet glowing fire of her bright orbs? Their beams too surely penetrated wheresoever they were directed. Anna knew that they had not been now pointed in vain.

That night the bow was less stiff, the manner less cold. He lighted her candle for her when she went upstairs, and she inwardly compared it to the rekindling of the flame within. When she was in her bedroom, she sat down—it was twelve o'clock—and wrote two letters; one to Nelson, the other

to Jessie. They were long, eager, hasty letters, written in extreme excitement and turbulence of mind, to judge from the varying expression of her countenance—the tears in her eyes—the trembling of her hand—the frequent erasures, and still more frequent interlineations. She sealed her letters without reading them over, and as if afraid of an inclination to unsay what she had written, crept downstairs to put them into the open post-bag, ready for the early morning mail. She felt like a culprit as she silently glided into the library and went to the side-table where the bag had been left, at her request, for the reception of her letters. She had begged Lady Georgiana so to leave it, hinting her intention of writing at daybreak the following morning. Her fingers trembled as she locked the bag, and she sank, for a moment, into the chair by the writing-table, as if unable to move. The letter-bag was on the table; she folded her arms across it, and leant her head upon them. Tears fell, accompanied by a slight hysterical sob. Her candle burnt out. She had written so long that she was unconscious of its having been flickering in the socket when she came downstairs. There was still the light of the fire in the dim library, that cast a faint red glow upon her white dress, and made her recumbent figure the prominent fea-

ture of the room. A marble bust stood on a pedestal close by, and was also made clear by the firelight. The calm, severe head of some old poet or divine seemed to be looking coldly down upon her, as if reproaching her for her self-abasement.

Hush! there is a sound—a movement at the other end of the room. Anna does not hear it, but continues to sob faintly over the closed letters. In the shadow, behind the large fire-screen, out of the easy-chair, a figure rises softly. It may be a dark ghost, it moves so breathlessly across the room. It draws near—nearer. A white hand is held, trembling like the sword that hung by a single hair over the head of Damocles of old, above the head of the mourning girl. It touches the soft, shining hair; another head bends low, and parted lips almost kiss the glossy braids, as they breathe the one word "Annabella!"

With a faint cry she throws back her head, and face to face she finds herself with her dearly-loved Chatham. Not knowing what she does—fancying herself in a dream or a fever—she sinks from the chair upon her knees, and, smothering a scream, covers her face with her hands. Prostrate at the feet of her lover, she knows not how, nor why, the haughty, imperious Anna kneels for a moment. Tenderly he strives to raise her, but the weakness

is past; Anna is again the empress. She rises majestically, and is about to hasten out of the room, but with a firm grasp Chatham retains her, and draws her towards the fire. Gently he seats her in the chair he has vacated, and flinging himself, in his turn, at her feet—not as a worshiper, or silly suitor, but in order that he may gaze into her eyes—and clasping both her hands, exclaims—

"Tell me, Anna Burton, I conjure you, are you going to marry Nelson Burford?"

The mesmeric fixing of the eyes, and the pressure of the burning hands, commanded truth, and it came.

"No—never," murmured Anna, with lips quivering and cheeks pale as death.

"Are you engaged to him?"

"Yes—no—no."

"Yes or no?"

"No."

"Have you been engaged to him?"

"Yes."

"Do you love him?"

"No."

"Why, then, were you engaged to him?"

"I do not know—I cannot tell."

"Did you ever love me?—say—speak—my life depends on it. My heart will burst."

"Yes."

"Say the word again—Do you love me still?"

"Yes: God knows it."

"Will you marry me—share my miserable, deserted fate?"

"I will."

"If my father renounces me, my friends give me up, and I am poor?"

"I will."

"You—the ambitious—the—the—?"

"I."

"You are mine?"

"Wholly."

"Will you—will you—go with me—from this very house—at once: tomorrow—marry me directly—put an end to all this agony, and be mine without consulting friends or relations, as I am yours?"

"Elope, do you mean?"

"Yes; or return to Fairfield and marry from thence."

"I cannot do that."

"Which?"

"Return home."

"Then you will fly with me?"

"Yes."

"Thank you! God bless you! I can breathe again. My heart! my heart! Happiness is worse

than misery to bear. You do not know what I have suffered since I heard that you and Burford were engaged."

"How did you know it?"

"Lady Mansford wrote to my father, and told him so."

"Lady Mansford also told me that you were engaged, or nearly so, to Miss Erskine."

"It was false: I would not have married her for all the gold of India."

"Why, then, did you go to London?"

"My father sent for me. He had just arrived in England, and meeting Miss Erskine again, still Miss Erskine, resolved that I should marry her. He had heard of my visit into Wales. He told me so, and said he understood that I had paid it on your account. I could not deny it, but assured him that you had refused me. He said that was equivalent to my disobeying him. He got into a furious passion, and vowed that if I did not, at once, propose for Miss Erskine, he would withdraw my allowance, and disinherit me. I knew that he had long only wanted an excuse for doing so, and I told him so; declaring that I never would marry Miss Erskine. He ordered me from his house, and I went back to my regiment. I wrote a half penitential, half reproachful letter to him, but received

no answer. I find he has kept his word, and I have nothing but my pay. It is starvation; still many live upon it, and we can economize. Anything is possible with you—nothing without you."

"What will the Countess and Lady Georgiana say? I dread them more than any one else, except my sister."

"Why your sister?"

"Because she will not approve of my conduct to Nelson—or—or—anything else."

"When did you break off your engagement with Nelson?"

"This very day; the letter is in that post-bag."

"Ah! for my sake? But I would not have them think us dishonourable."

"The letter was written before I knew that you thought of me still."

"They must all be made to understand this. I heard you tell my aunt that you had a letter to put into the bag, and resolved to remain here, if the whole night, until you came."

"I am sure I was born to make everybody belonging to me miserable, Captain Michelson: if I am doing wrong for your sake, you must not let the evil consequences fall on me. I do not know what is right and what is wrong in this case; it is all confused in my mind, and I scarcely wish to

unravel it. Yet I know it was wrong to promise to be the wife of another, when I loved you. I know it is wrong to break an engagement, though it would be worse, far worse, to marry with the hand one man whilst my heart is in your keeping. I know it is wrong to let you marry me, under all the circumstances of your position. And Jessie, Pynsent, what will they think? and Captain Burford, and Uncle Timothy, and—and—Nelson? I can never see them again, never! Oh, Captain Michelson! it must not, it cannot be."

Anna covered her face with her hands, and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Chatham prayed, entreated her for his sake to be calm.

"Anna, dearest Anna, shall I not be more than brother, sister, friend to you? I want no friends but you. Cannot you renounce your home, your friends, for one who will love you till death, and who has so very few to love him, that he will find in you alone his only hope and treasure? Think of what you give, not of what you lose. Is it not better to save one from despair or death, than to share the happiness of many? Do not weep so, but think of me—of me."

"I do, I do; but Jessie—you cannot tell what her love is; what it would be to lose it, and to forfeit her esteem."

"Do you not think, Annabella, that you may be doing her a service by renouncing Nelson? Did you never suspect that she loved him? Did you never notice the sad, pained look, that came from her very heart to her truthful eyes, when he devoted himself to you? My own fears, I suppose, made me more conscious of such things than you were."

"Can this be? Am I such a selfish wretch that I could even take her hopes away, without pain to myself on her account? And can you love one who, to gratify her own momentary feelings, has done such things? Oh! I am not deserving of the love of such a heart as yours."

"Anna, was it not on my account? was it not my fault? Do not upbraid yourself thus. All this excitement will make you ill. We will talk no more now; you must go to rest, and try to compose yourself, looking only on our future happiness, and leaving other matters to take care of themselves. When that letter has reached its destination, and the worst is known at home, we will meet again. Three days from this time, if you will remain in the school-room, from some excuse or other I will watch my opportunity, and join you there. You must think over the possibilities yourself meanwhile, and whatever you wish, I

will adhere to. If you have the courage to allow me to declare our intentions to my grandmother, I will do so. If you prefer facing your friends at home, I will follow you there; or if you will leave this place with me, four-and-twenty hours shall unite us, without the intervention of friends. Your will is mine. And now, my own dear Anna, be as happy as I am; sleep, and dream gentle dreams of love and joy."

As Chatham spoke, he tried to throw a tone of hope and mirth into his words, but he performed the operation ill. That letter in the post-bag weighed upon his mind. He esteemed Nelson,—they were friends; and his kind, generous heart shrank at the pain about to be inflicted on *him*. He felt, also, that the whole affair was false and hollow, and might even be reckoned dishonourable; but he looked at his beautiful Anna, and smothered the scruples that could separate for a moment such a fair creature from him. He lighted one of the library candles, and again entreated Anna to be calm, and to retire. The timepiece struck three. Anna started in affright, and took the proffered candle. Again she put it down.

"Are we doing very wrong? am I very wicked?" she said, with eyes full of tears, that appealed more forcibly to the love than the reason of him whom

she addressed. For answer he pressed her hand, and said—

"Do we love one another? Where true love is, there can surely be no sin."

With this fallacious response, he put her candle in her hand and led her gently to the door.

When Anna reached her room, she stood some time with her hands clasped, like one in a dream. The tumult of supreme happiness, and the sense of some heavy calamity, seemed to mingle in her breast. Visions of joy and terror swam before her eyes. To be beloved, as she knew she was beloved, was bliss; but to have the displeasure and sorrow of the friends of her whole life hanging upon that love was anguish. When she regained some degree of composure, and tried to examine into the "first step" of her many inconsistencies, she found that it was taken when she first encouraged Nelson, whom she did not love, simply because she fancied Chatham was estranged from her. How many, from pride, pique, vanity, and revenge, have similarly fallen! She could not bear to think of the disappointment and agony of Nelson,—he, so reserved, yet so susceptible! of the anger of Pynsent; the delighted ire of the Captain, and the surprise and sorrow of Jessie. Her name would be a reproach; she would be called coquette

—jilt. And would she not deserve it? But then to be married to Chatham! Would not that alone make amends for all the rest? What was the love of the whole world compared with his love? And thus she thought, and thought; negligently laying aside the muslin dress and Christmas ornaments, and unfastening the long, black hair,—so long, that it reached far below her waist, and hung about her face like night around the moon.

Happily for us sinful mortals, there is habit in prayer as in everything else. Those who have lisped their night and morning prayers at a mother's knee in infancy and childhood, and have felt it a kind of duty to hurry through them in boyhood or girlhood, still preserve the practice in more advanced years, even though the spirit within them be dead to the efficacy of the words they breathe. Numbers who are careless about religion, and pass their lives in a "vain shadow," or in merely worldly pursuits, still kneel by their bedsides at morn and eve, to say the words they have been accustomed to say to the Great Giver of all good things. It may be they take His great name in vain, by using it in the soulless way they do; still, better, far better the mere form than none at all. The sinner may be made to think whilst bending before the throne of the Most High; and one serious thought,

like the first link in some great chain, may string itself to another and another, until they shape themselves into the one mysterious whole that shall reach heaven in the form of prayer.

With a heart literally "divided against itself," and little inclined to pious meditation, Anna knelt as she used to do, before she lay down upon her bed. Her devotion, like the rest of her acts and deeds, was ever a matter of mere impulse. Sometimes she could pour forth impassioned prayers; at others, they were dead as the bones in the vision of Ezekiel. Now she repeated the words of some prayer that came mechanically from her lips, and concluded by the heedless utterance of Our Lord's Prayer. She was about to rise from her knees, when a sudden light struck, like an arrow, into her heart. Whether the Father of the fatherless, looking upon His prostrate but heedless child, took pity on the orphan according to His promise, and sent that divine ray into her soul of His own tender mercy,—or whether He has listened to the supplications of that far-off sister for the stray white lamb of her affection, none shall say,—but certain it is that the ray has pierced through the dark places. Suddenly Anna sees revealed the selfishness of her own heart; and who, that for the first time beholds that selfishness, can behold it un-

shaken? Such a sight is good, though unutterably painful. The effects of it may pass away, still it is never quite forgotten. She knew that it was self alone she had sought to please, without thought of God or man, sister or brother. She had known but the one idol,—her own beautiful, but faulty self. And now she wept real tears of penitence; she sobbed out her sudden sense of the pain she had caused, and might cause. She remembered her sister and Nelson, and seemed to be awakened to new views of them. She saw that she had caused Chatham's rupture with his father, and would probably bring him to poverty. Above all, she was conscious of her forgetfulness of the God whom she had been early taught to worship, and that she had lived for this world and herself alone. We will leave her to her tears and supplications: they are bitter and heartfelt, but, like strong medicine, efficacious to save.

All that evening both the Countess and the Lady Georgiana had narrowly watched Chatham and Anna. They had long known his feelings; they had been doubtful until then of hers; they were so no more: they saw the excited anxiety to please, and to draw him towards her; the expressive delight of her whole manner when she had done so. They saw the sudden change in him. He had been

uncommunicative on all points during his visit, therefore they knew nothing of his father's conduct, and had attributed his melancholy wholly to his uncertainty about Anna. He avoided the subject, and used every possible means to prevent finding himself alone with his aunt; whilst she resolved to speak to him again upon it. She was annoyed with him, and angry with Anna, though she could not help confessing to herself that it was Chatham who had sought Anna in spite of prudence and common sense.

During the three following days it would have been evident even to a stranger that some kind of understanding had taken place between them. His unreserved attention to her, his high spirits, his improved looks,—all proved that a change, but not, like Byron's, a melancholy one, had "come o'er the spirit of his dream." She too was changed. Her moods were still fitful, like the lightning,—now darting brilliantly through the atmosphere that surrounded her, and vanishing away; now flooding her horizon for a few seconds, and disappearing; or playing with clouds, as if to show the lights and shadows of her varying temperament. But her glance was always soft when she looked at Chatham; her cheek always bright when his eyes met hers. Still she was not happy. The letter and

its consequences weighed upon her heart. She seemed to travel with it its two days' journey, and to long to drag the wheels of the coach as it drew nearer and nearer to her home. She knew the post time but too well. When it approached, she rushed out alone into the frosty air and paced the shrubberies. She heard Chatham's footsteps near, but avoided him, as if he had no right to be with her, when he was helping her to inflict so much pain. She saw clearly in imagination the letter given to Nelson. She watched the change in his usually firm, severe countenance, from pleasure to rage, passion, anguish. She knew so well how it would be. Would he kill himself? No; men rarely did that for love: never, she believed. Would he go mad? She could not tell; the strength of his passion was so great. She worked herself into such an agony of fear that she was obliged to return to the house, to her room, and there think of the consequences to him who loved her so well. Then came the evening, and she saw Pynsent giving Jessie her letter. Perhaps the elders were present. She needed no *clairvoyance* to transport herself, body and soul, into that old hall, and watch the effects of her passionate outpourings upon her sister. She saw the painful expression of her usually calm features, the

tears in her sweet eyes, the doubt, fear, and perplexity of her mind. Would she read the letter aloud at once? No; she thought not. She would study it again, alone, and then she would fall down on her knees and pray for her;—for her, so selfish, so inconsiderate. She would not rejoice that Nelson was free once more: she would only feel for him. And at all these truly-pictured scenes Anna could only weep. She was far away, and had caused them all.

CHAPTER XXV.

"*Valentine.* Love is your master, for he masters you;
And he that is so yoked by a fool
Methinks should not be chronicled for wise.
Proteus. Yet writers say, as in the sweetest bud
The eating canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all.
Val. And writers say, As the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so by love the young and tender wit
Is turned to folly."—*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

"I CANNOT settle anything until I have heard from them; indeed I cannot!" said Anna, when, on the following day, she and Chatham were alone in the school-room, according to appointment. She was really unwell, and declined walking. The Lady Georgiana had taken the children out with her; the Countess was in her boudoir; Chatham had made a feint of going out for a ride, and had returned by the backway, as soon as he saw, from a distance, his aunt and little cousins set out for their walk.

"But this is over-fastidiousness," said Chatham. "You have written openly to tell them the real

state of your feelings: you have broken off your engagement with Burford before any interview took place between us, and—"

"But I have not heard how he has received my letter, or whether he accepts my refusal."

"What else can he do, my dear Anna?"

"He is of a very stern nature, and he may cast all the blame on you; he may think we are both acting dishonourably, and that you have persuaded me to this."

"And if he does, I am a soldier, and so is he."

Chatham said this with a defiant air, and Anna trembled.

"I will not make up my mind to anything until I hear," she said resolutely; "and—and—I feel quite sure that I could never stoop to elope from this roof. I could do it better if I belonged to the house; but in my present position, never. I feel that it would be a tacit consent to their notions that I am not good enough to enter their family; whereas I am equal with them in all but fortune."

"But, Anna, what will you do? I have your promise to be mine. You cannot retract that. You say you will not return home. I fear, at least I fancy—"

"I know what you would say. Your aunt would

not choose you to take a poor governess for your bride from under her roof: of course she would not. With all her nominal Christianity she is not strong-minded, or rather humble-minded, enough for that. She is fluent in her praise of the unworldly, of those who do right and generously by their neighbours, without counting the cost in the eyes of the world. But put her to the test! Try her! I have felt the change in her manners even since she suspected you liked me. What do you think she would do if she knew the present state of the case? Probably, with *Christian* suavity, give me my dismissal at a moment's notice. They are all alike."

"You are hard upon her. But will you give me your permission to put her to the test? Will you run the risk of her doing what you say? And then, when all is clear, and she knows your sentiments and mine, will you marry me when you leave her?"

"Yes; I think I can do this. But I must first hear from home. You cannot imagine how dreadful has been the oppression of the past night: I thought I should have died. If I slept, my dreams were more uncomfortable than my waking thoughts. I actually dreamed that I saw Nelson dying, and heard him upbraiding me as the cause of his death;

and Captain Burford was threatening me in the most awful manner; and Jessie was weeping; and all was confusion at Fairfield. And you—and you—they were tearing me away from you, and declaring that I should never see you again."

"And you awoke and found it nothing but a dream. You are tormenting yourself foolishly. You have done all you could. We cannot command our affections. It was ordained that you and I should love one another, and therefore you could not care for Nelson. We can never love truly more than once."

"But then—but then—I ought not to have accepted him,—my brother's friend, the son of my father's dearest friend—"

"And promised, almost pledged to your sister. Look upon him in a different light, Anna. Was he not first false to her, in heart, if not in words? I know he was: I saw it. If he had not seen you, he would have married her. He could not help it, any more than we can help what we are doing. I am a fatalist in these matters. Believe me, half the world commit secretly the sins that one-third either do openly or have brought to light by circumstances. Hypocrisy, good fortune, or good management make one's reputation. I shall never gain a reputation, for I cannot be a hypocrite. For-

tune frowns upon me, and management of any kind was never taught me."

"Jessie would disprove your argument; but I am a bad talker on these matters, being, I fear, too much of your own frame of mind; but she would say, that whatever is wrong in our nature, or whatever temptations may beset us, we ought to strive against and master."

"Annabella Burton turned moralist! Those lips were never formed for such dry doctrine. Leave it to your 'wisers,' and let you and I talk folly. There is time enough for gravity when, Darby and Joan-like, we get grey together. Now, darling Anna, look cheerful before I go away, and I promise you that I will grow good and steady, and talk propriety with you by-and-by."

"Captain Michelson, one word more."

"Anna Burton! If you ever call me Captain Michelson again I will never forgive you."

"Chatham, then, listen to me. Perhaps you may repent what you are going to do. Hear what I say. If, upon due consideration or consultation with others, you should think it wiser and more prudent to give up this engagement, I shall at once release you from it. One thing I am capable of that is right, and that is to abide by the consequences of my imprudence alone."

"But I am not capable of allowing you to abide by those awful consequences alone, being too much interested in them myself. You are magnanimous, my dearest Anna; but magnanimity was another of the virtues that they never taught me in my youth, and that I fear I shall never acquire in my age. So I shall require your support and assistance in this vast struggle."

"I hear the children," said Anna, rising in some alarm: "you had better go."

"Indeed I shall not," replied Chatham with much *nonchalance;* "they can come here if they like; I shall not hurt them. They are very nice little people."

"Oh! Miss Burton, how are you now?" exclaimed Rose, bursting into the room. "Cousin Chatham! Mamma has been asking and looking for you, and Saunders said you were come in from your ride, but he did not know where you were."

"You see, little Rose," said Chatham, "I have taken advantage of your absence to come and get a lesson in grammar from Miss Burton. We have been construing verbs."

"I hate that," said the child, "it is so dry. But I dare say you have been saying easy and pleasant verbs," she added archly, "though Miss Burton says she dislikes grammar just as much as I

do, and never used to get her lesson perfect at school."

"Well," continued Chatham, "I do not think she understands it as well as her pupils, or was half as much interested in it. Where is your grammar? and we will question her."

"Here it is, Cousin,—that horrid Murray."

"Ah! the very book! I see they have the proper verbs here as well as in Latin. The verb 'To Love,' through all its 'modifications and derivations' of 'number, person, mood, and tense.' Look here, little Rose, and I will explain it to you. Aunt Georgiana, come here and listen to my lesson of grammar."

The Lady Georgiana had appeared at the door, and looked surprised at seeing Chatham. She entered the room, and he continued, unabashed:—

"Verb 'To Love.' 'Number,' two. 'Person,' two also, decidedly. 'Mood,' superlative,—I mean imperative, because it is used for 'commanding, exhorting, entreating, or permitting,' as 'Let me love; love thou, or do thou love; let him or her love; let us love, etc.' 'Tense or time,' present, assuredly,—always present. Am I not right, Aunt Georgey? Do I not understand grammar well?"

"You certainly appear to know something of that verb," said the Lady Georgiana. "I hope your head is better, Miss Burton."

"Thank you, it aches still," replied Anna, with an effort to overcome her confusion, and a somewhat guilty blush on her cheek.

"Oh! that is not half, Aunt," again persisted Chatham. "They have such moods in this verb. Here is the indicative, which simply indicates the 'soft impeachment;' then comes the potential, a most powerful mood, but varied in its influences: for instance, 'I may, might, could, would, or should love, or have loved.' What could give greater scope or latitude to the 'bewildering dream'? That is my mood."

"Your mood is a very peculiar one today, I think," said the Lady Georgiana, struggling to conceal her annoyance.

"Tolerably happy nevertheless," was the reply.

"I believe we are interrupting lessons just at present," said the Lady Georgiana; "if, indeed, you feel equal to having the children this afternoon, Miss Burton?"

"Oh, perfectly, I thank you," was Anna's reply; and her guests left the room.

"Chatham, I really think you are more harebrained than ever," said the Lady Georgiana when they were walking down the long passage.

"Why? because I am a better grammarian than

I used to be, and have learnt to understand the verb 'to love'? That is an unjust accusation."

Chatham would have said more, but he respected Anna's desire to receive letters from home, and resolved to wait till they came.

"I will join you shortly, Aunt," he added, as he suddenly disappeared into his own apartment.

The very day that Anna expected to hear from Fairfield, was that previous to the one on which Chatham was compelled to leave Plas Ayron. When he got out of bed that morning, he felt himself, as the Americans would say, "in a fix." He wished to settle all his plans for the future before he went away, but it was impossible to do so, unless he could manage to remain some days longer. He could not venture to ask for more leave of absence, therefore what was he to do? He suddenly felt very poorly. It was a curious transition from a state of anxious thought, to one of nervous excitement. Any one who had seen him, five minutes before, meditating with a razor in his hand, before the looking-glass, and apparently in good health, would have been surprised to behold him stalking up and down the room, apparently out of his mind. Now he puts one hand on the other to feel his pulse; now he places it on his heart; again he presses his forehead.

"Violent palpitation of the heart, and feverish headache, will be best," he mutters. "I have them often enough, and my pulse is always quick; moreover it will have time to subside against he comes. I declare I *have* a slight headache, and *am* rather feverish. As to my heart, it always beats very violently. There is quite enough for a case."

Chatham threw down the razor; took off such garments as he had put on; laughed heartily, and jumped into bed. No sooner had he got in than he was out again, and put a decanter of water and a glass by his bedside, together with a small bottle of drops that he was accustomed to take when he suffered from palpitation of the heart. He was soon in bed again, and rang the bell violently. The butler made his appearance.

"Saunders," began Chatham in a feeble voice, "I have been very ill. Those dreadful palpitations! they will kill me sooner or later. Nothing relieves me this morning. I really think I must have Dr. Jones. Could you send for him without alarming the Countess or Lady Georgiana? I have had such a night!"

"Bless me! bless me! you look uncommon ill. I will send directly, Sir. Can I do anything, Sir?"

"No, thank you, Saunders. If you would just send at once. How long is it before the doctor can arrive?"

"About an hour, Sir, if he is at home when the messenger gets to town."

"Then pray send, but do not alarm the house. Bring him up quietly. Tell them that I am not very well. Do not let my grandmother know anything about it at present. Oh, these spasms!"

Here Chatham made an awful face, that so frightened Saunders as to send him from the room in a moment, and thence to despatch a messenger for the doctor. He soon returned.

"Are you better now, Sir?" he asked.

"A little, Saunders: very little. Oh dear!"

"Don't give way, Sir; they will be better by-and-by. A little brandy, Sir. Better let me ask my Lady for something: she knows what's good for those sort of complaints."

"I will have a cup of strong coffee and a little dry toast. These attacks exhaust me so much that I am obliged to eat and drink to support nature."

"Try an egg, Sir?—a beaten egg?"

"I cannot bear beaten eggs; but perhaps I could swallow a boiled one. Oh, this pain!"

Another fearful contortion of the face sent Saunders off again to see whether the messenger was gone. He returned accompanied by the Lady Georgiana.

"My dear Chatham, what is the matter?" she began.

"Confound that fool, Saunders!" murmured Chatham, when he heard his aunt's voice. "Only an attack of spasms: do not be alarmed, my dear Aunt, but I thought it best to send for Dr. Jones."

"He is only a surgeon, Chatham, not a physician. Shall we send off to Cardigan for a physician?"

"Oh no! by no means. I dare—say—they—will—pass,—oh! such sudden twinges!"

"Let me feel your pulse."

Here Saunders, who had previously left the room, returned with coffee and toast.

"If you will leave me now, I will drink a cup of coffee and try to sleep. I hope I shall soon be better, but they make me so very weak for days."

"You do not look very ill, either," said the Lady Georgiana. "I hope you are not alarmed."

"These spasms always alarm me. But I cannot talk just at present."

"Let me get you a sedative."

"There is my remedy," said Chatham, pointing to the bottle on the chair, "but it has wholly failed. I will wait till the doctor comes."

"Breakfast is waiting, my Lady," said Saunders, "I will attend to Captain Michelson."

"Oh, pray go, my dear Aunt; you will alarm my grandmother if you remain here."

"Promise to send for me if the spasms return."

"Certainly; I surely will."

The Lady Georgiana went away, and Chatham sat up in bed, rising with apparent effort. It was however without any apparent effort that he drank his coffee, and ate his eggs and toast; although he assured Saunders that he did it purely from principle. It is strange how many invalids make very good meals upon that same "principle!" it is evidently easy of digestion. When he had finished his breakfast, he told Saunders that he would try to sleep, and made himself comfortable for that purpose. He either slept, or feigned sleep, for nearly an hour, and, when his aunt crept on tiptoe into the room, was breathing heavily, and seemingly with difficulty. His face was concealed by the bedclothes, and she could not see how he looked. She crept again out of the room, and when she was gone, the head rose slowly from underneath the sheets, and peered round the apartment.

"I really am not well, and my heart is slightly affected," he said; "I wonder how I look!"

He jumped out of bed, and stood before the glass.

"Rather too well, I fear," he continued in soliloquy: "palish, but not pale enough for so violent an attack."

He began to put his whiskers into all kinds of

curious shapes, and to ruffle his fine black locks. A horse was heard tearing up the drive: he was in bed again in a moment. In less than five minutes more Dr. Jones, the country apothecary, was feeling his pulse.

"I am better now," said Chatham feebly, "but these heart attacks are dreadful whilst they last."

"Ah! surely! yes!" ejaculated Dr. Jones, his hand on the pulse, and his eye on the minute-hand of his watch. "Subsiding; no alarming symptom in the pulse: rather quick still."

"You should feel them during the attack," groaned Chatham, turning up the whites of his eyes.

"Very bad, Sir, eh? I suppose so. Subject to these attacks?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, very. They leave one so awfully weak."

"A good deal of indigestion, I imagine; the pulse does not vary much," said Dr. Jones; "let me look at your tongue. Ah! thank you; that will do," and he shook his head at sight of the tongue,—why, Chatham could not imagine. "How long have you been subject to heart complaint?"

"Ever since I can remember: but it is always the same, the doctor never arrives till the attack is past or passing, and is never a fair judge."

"Oh, cause and effect, Sir; we judge of causes

by their effects. Nervous temperament, I should say?"

"Awfully," said Chatham, with an unexpected twinge of the muscles of the face; "so sensitive that I can scarcely bear any one to mention my nerves. Cause and effect, I suppose, Doctor?"

"Precisely. Did you ever consult any eminent practitioner?"

"Half London, but to no purpose."

"How strange!" said the Doctor sagaciously. "It seems to me such a very clear case; but those dons don't always see straight," and here he muttered several Latin words, too hard for a soldier to understand.

"I feel that if I could be under your care for a week," said Chatham, "I should get well: I have such confidence in your skill, from all I have heard my Aunt say of you."

"Much honoured! her Ladyship always very kind, I'm sure. I think I could set you up in a week."

"The misfortune is—" said Chatham, rising in the bed, and suddenly sinking back again,—"oh, this weakness!—the misfortune is, that I am compelled to return to my regiment at once."

"Impossible, Sir! it might be your death."

"Such are the hard rules of the Army: unless

indeed you thought it right to send a sick certificate."

"Of course I do; I would not answer for the consequences," said the Doctor, getting up and walking about the room in some wrath.

"There is no time to lose, then," said Chatham, "since it must be sent by this very post. There are writing materials on that table, if you will take the trouble. How talking does exhaust one!"

"Pray keep quiet; I will write at once;" and with all the "pomp and circumstance" of office, Dr. Jones took a pen from the inkstand: it was full of ink, and slit half through: he carefully wiped it in the tail of his coat, abstracted a penknife from his pocket, and slowly began to mend it. Having secured a fine point, he turned over the leaves of the blotting-book until he found a stray sheet of paper, and then deliberately sat down. Chatham thought he would never have concocted that bulletin. With his elbow on the table, and his consideration cap on his mind, he sat thinking. At last he slowly wrote his certificate, and then read it. It was not finished. He made several corrections, and patiently copied it. When he found it to his taste, he rose, and presented it to Chatham. Nothing could be more satisfactory to the invalid, inasmuch as it testified to his being in

a very dangerous state from heart complaint. Chatham began to grow nervous, and to fancy that his sham illness had been turned into a real one, as a judgment upon him. He put a guinea into the hand of the Doctor, who again seated himself by his side, and began deliberately to count his pulse. Excitement and exertion had quickened them, and brought a feverish colour into his cheek. Dr. Jones shook his head; he rose hastily, saying, "We must put a stop to this," and with a low bow quitted his patient.

Lady Georgiana met him in the hall.

"What do you think of Captain Michelson, Mr. Jones?" she asked.

"Nothing very alarming, my Lady; we shall set him up with care and time: requires great quiet: tendency to disease of the heart: weakness and unnatural excitement: pulse quick, feverish,—but a week's doctoring and dosing will do wonders. I have written his sick certificate, so we shall have time. I assure your Ladyship that your Ladyship need not be alarmed. Excuse me, my Lady, I must hasten to send the necessary remedies. If your Ladyship would send at once for medicine, I should be much obliged."

A messenger was forthwith despatched, and returned in due course of time, with a whole basket

of drugs. Lady Georgiana seized upon them, and took them herself to Chatham.

"Two of these pills to be taken at once; three tablespoonfuls of this mixture every four hours," she read aloud to the invalid; "let me give them to you. Now, here is water, and a roasted apple to take after them."

"I cannot swallow pills," said Chatham; "I never could: I wish I had told him so."

"You must! or, would you rather take the mixture first, and the pills in an hour?"

"I really do not see how I can swallow either; I am such a baby in the matter of medicine."

"I will certainly call my mother," said the Lady Georgiana, smiling; "do you remember that you used to be half drenched by her when you were a boy? You must take this medicine."

"Well, I will make an attempt to swallow the pills; but you need not be at the trouble of making yourself sick by watching me."

"I have no weakness of that kind, my dear Chatham; I am too much accustomed to dose children and servants, to say nothing of poor people, who are frequently more tiresome than you are."

Chatham perceived that there was no remedy, and accordingly swallowed two of the bitterest pills he had ever slipped down his most unwilling throat.

"You are to be kept quite quiet, so I will leave you for the present," said Lady Georgiana; "you shall have some arrowroot or sago by-and-by."

"I cannot drink slops," said Chatham, "and I believe I require great support in these attacks. Thank you, my dear Aunt; I think I had better talk no more just at present."

Lady Georgiana left the room once more, and Chatham blessed his luckless stars that she was gone. He procured a book from the table, and was deep in the trials of 'Jenny Deans,' when he heard his door creak, in about half an hour's time, and once more saw his aunt appear. His book and head were under the bedclothes before she stood by the bed.

"Chatham, I am sorry to disturb you," she said, "but it is time that you should take your mixture."

"Confound the mixture!" muttered Chatham under the bedclothes, already feeling rather sick from the effects of the pills.

When he looked up, there was his aunt, with a glassful of the nauseous ingredients in one hand and an orange in the other. He had no choice; he must pay the penalty of his cheat, and swallow some of the bitters as well as the sweets of the god Cupid: he made such a grimace that his aunt laughed heartily.

"Excuse me, Chatham; I could not help it; you must not be ill long, or your face will be turned inside out."

"Something else will," growled Chatham.

No sooner was his aunt's back turned than he put his watch on half an hour. He tried to read in vain. He had no longer occasion to sham illness; he was so dreadfully sick, that he believed Dr. Jones had poisoned him. Never had he looked at his watch so anxiously before. Saunders came with his Lady's arrowroot and his own, or, more properly, the cook's little *recherché* omelette. Chatham could touch neither.

"If I get out of this," he murmured when again alone, "I vow I will never act, much less speak, a lie again as long as I live. This is the first and the last. Anna! Anna! if you cost me as much in wedded life as you have in single, I shall heartily repent marrying you."

Three hours, or rather two hours and a half passed, and Chatham poured out the three tablespoonfuls of the odious mixture, got out of bed and threw it under the grate amongst the ashes; then he stirred the fire over it, and effectually concealed all traces, returned to his bed, and put the glass by his side.

"Now, Chatham, it is time for your mixture,"

said Lady Georgiana, when the actual three hours had intervened.

"I have taken it, I thank you,—I mean it is gone," said Chatham; the first half of his speech having been said aloud, and the last under the bedclothes, as a kind of mental reservation, in pursuance of his resolution never to tell another lie, white or black.

"But it is not time," said his aunt in some alarm.

"Past, by my watch," said Chatham.

"There must be some strange alteration in the clock," said the Lady Georgiana. "How do you feel?"

"As sick as a hundred dogs, I should think."

"Have you had any return of palpitation?"

"None whatever."

"The children send their loves. They are dying to come and see you, and making themselves miserable about you."

"Oh, pray let them come by-and-by. Is the post in?"

"I think it has just come. I will go and open the bags."

When Lady Georgiana was gone, Chatham again jumped out of bed, and wrote a few lines to Anna, explaining matters, and begging her to

send a reply through the children. He put his note between the leaves of a book, wrapping the book carelessly in paper, but tying it round with twine. By-and-by a tap at the door was followed by Rose and a letter. To his little visitor he gave the book for Anna, and told her to ask Miss Burton for the second volume, if she had done reading it, and to bring it to him in the evening, by which time he knew she must have received and digested letters from home.

In due haste and importance came, in the course of the afternoon, Dr. Jones. He pronounced the symptoms favourable, the fever abated, and the pulse slackened. Chatham no longer required to feign, for he was unquestionably indisposed.

In the evening the children came, and brought the book.

"Why did Miss Burton wrap it up, Cousin?" asked Violet.

"Perhaps she did not think it a proper book for you to look into,—the reason that made me wrap up mine." Chatham bit his tongue at the sudden recollection that he was uttering another falsehood.

"Oh no! Miss Burton knows that we would not read books she tells us not to read," said Violet.

"I must send you away now, dears, because I

cannot talk much. Thank Miss Burton for the book." The children kissed him, and departed.

Chatham soon opened the little parcel. Inside the leaves of the book were two letters, on which was written "Read this." Chatham opened, with fear and trembling, the letter directed in a man's hand. It contained the one simple but powerful sentence—

"False, deluding Annabella, you are free.

"NELSON BURFORD."

Underneath this was written in pencil by Anna, "Do what you like."

"Short and sweet," said Chatham, with a real sharp pain at his heart. He felt deeply for Nelson, and he knew that all was not right. He opened the other letter, which was from Jessie. This was written in great agitation: there was evidently a powerful conflict in the mind of the writer. "You have been wrong, very wrong, dearest Anna, and right, very right: wrong to accept one you did not love, and right to break off your engagement when you found that you could not love him. But if this has been all done from mere sudden passion, pique, fancy, vanity,—anything but reason and right principle,—it is all, all wrong. I do not clearly see the right, for some one must

suffer. Poor Nelson! I have not seen him for a long time; I am still less likely to see him now, but I know what he will endure. Oh, Anna! could you not love him?—him, so gentle, yet so firm; so honourable and so brave; so tender and, at heart, so loving? You do not know him, or you could not have treated him thus. He is not like other men: the more reserved his nature, the more sensitive; and, once deceived, mortified, wounded, he will never, never be the same again. He may grow morose and misanthropic, and will, I am almost sure, be lost to his friends for ever. Anna, Anna, what has your beauty done! My poor, poor sister!"

"What has her beauty done?" murmured Chatham, as he pondered over Jessie's letter. "Made a conquest of two hearts as different as can be. Nelson is all Jessie says,—the soul of honour, gravity, constancy, reserve, kindness, bravery, and particularity; I, his successful rival, have some honour too, but am the soul of mirth, candour, inconstancy, selfishness, and carelessness. Lewis Gwynne, again, is the soul of stiffness, starchness, stupidity, vanity, and priggishness. Yet she has brought us all three fairly at her feet: no reservation, no counting costs. And all for what? I cannot tell myself. Not great talent nor great

sense, though she has enough of both for a woman, but simple fascination. What is there in this one daughter of that tempting and doubtless equally beautiful mother Eve, to have such power? and will it not still exist when we are married? and am not I the most jealous of created beings? But she loves me,—at least I think she does, for she never gave me any decided demonstrations. And here am I fibbing and feeling as sick as if I was at sea, and giving up my horses, and offending my friends, and getting lackadaisical, and making a fool of myself,—and all 'because a woman's fair,' as the song says. But 'what's the odds as long as you're happy?' So my mind is made up and '*allons notre train, vogue la galère,*' as that prince of love-makers, Molière, hath it. And I don't care what happens. And if 'don't care' *was* eaten up by lions, as the Spelling-book said, why one can only be eaten up once in one's life, and it does not matter much when the meal is made; so love and Anna for ever!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Joys unexpected, and in desperate plight,
Are still most sweet, and prove from whence they come;
When earth's still moonlike confidence in joy
Is at her full: true joy, descending far
From past her sphere, and from that highest heaven
That moves, and is not moved."—GEORGE CHAPMAN.

"I AM five or six and twenty, Aunt Georgiana," said Chatham the following morning, seated in the easy chair in the library and looking rather poorly, "and I do not see why I may not fall in love if I have a fancy that way, as well as my fathers before me."

"I dare say you may, and have fallen in love with impunity a hundred times," said the Lady Georgiana; "but I return to my old starting-point, and say that you ought to have some respect for young ladies' hearts, as well as your own."

"I have the greatest possible respect for all sorts of palpitations; I am too well acquainted with their motions not to have a feeling in common

with them all. But to be serious, what should you think of my getting married?"

The Lady Georgiana started; but, pausing a moment as if to arrange her ideas, she said—

"It would depend on circumstances, as such matters generally do."

"Be so good as to explain what you mean by 'circumstances,'" said Chatham.

"The circumstances that would make me think your marrying prudent, would be your making a sensible match."

"And now, be so good as to explain what you mean by a 'sensible match.'"

"A sensible match, in my opinion, would be a lady of your own rank in life, with sufficient fortune to make up for your own lack of it."

"Surely it is not the Lady Georgiana Meredith that is speaking," said Chatham, uplifting his eyebrows; "that usually disinterested lady, whom I have always heard descant so warmly on the beauty and fitness of mutual attachment, suitability of disposition and reciprocity of sentiments, etc. etc."

Lady Georgiana blushed slightly, for she felt that her anxiety about Chatham had led her to forget her "first principles."

"All that is understood," she said.

"Then, supposing I should choose to marry a

lady who had not the 'expressed' part of the 'good match' to boast of, but all, and a vast deal more than the 'understood,' what should you think?"

"That you would be very unwise and imprudent, and would probably bring down much misery on her and yourself both."

Chatham bit his lip.

"What if it is signed, sealed, and settled?" he asked.

"That the sooner it is unsigned, unsealed, and unsettled, the better," replied the Lady Georgiana quickly.

"All women are alike," said Chatham; "not one of you will allow any one but her own individual self to marry without station and money. If a woman falls in love herself with a scamp or a beggar, she sees no obstacles; but let any one belonging to her do the same, and law and justice are forgotten in her anxiety to prevent the result. I always looked upon you as a perfect woman until now, because I thought you unselfish."

"I am anxious for your welfare, Chatham," said Lady Georgiana calmly.

"That is only to be assured by my marrying a woman that I could love," said Chatham. "I should become the merest *roué* and *vaut-rien* in

existence, if I was mated with one I did not care for."

Lady Georgiana felt there was truth in this, and scarcely knew how to reply. Whilst she was considering the matter, Chatham anticipated her by adding—

"I know all your arguments, good and bad; but it is useless beating about the bush when we each know the game the other is aiming at. I have loved Annabella Burton from the first moment I saw her; and it is my full intention, having, I am happy to say, gained her consent, to marry her."

This downright declaration confounded Lady Georgiana. At last she said—

"Chatham, you cannot be in earnest!"

"For the very first time in my life, yes, I am in earnest."

"You cannot, of course, expect me to countenance such an engagement,—here! under my roof! my nephew—and—and—my governess!"

Lady Georgiana was growing very red.

"As to your 'countenance,'" said Chatham satirically, "you must wear that as you think proper."

"Ungrateful! deceitful!" murmured Lady Georgiana.

"Not Miss Burton," interrupted Chatham;

"she has only within the last two days accepted my proposal; and had she been as anxious as I am, she would have been on the road to Gretna, or some less romantic church, at this moment; but she spurns all underhand proceedings."

"This is too absurd, Chatham. You know that your father would not consent to such a match, and that you are dependent upon him."

"He has kindly removed that obstacle."

"How?"

"By removing his allowance, and leaving me independent."

"Have you quarrelled?"

"I suppose so; since he politely declared his intention of cutting me off with a shilling if I did not marry that 'good match,' Miss Erskine. I asked him—with Sheridan, I think it was—whether he 'chanced to have the shilling in his pocket,' as I sadly wanted one; and he got into a furious passion, and so we parted. Since this I have been living on my pay and my own resources."

"And you mean to marry Miss Burton?"

"Yes."

"And starve with her?"

"I ardently hope not; because I always think death by hunger must be the most painful of all deaths, and shooting oneself would be better."

"I wish she had never come here. At all events, it is impossible for her to remain."

"Justice and moderation again!" said Chatham. "Her coming here had nothing to do with it, for I should have seen her at Fairfield; and I trust she will soon be, as my wife, under no obligation to any one for the shelter of a roof."

Chatham rose from his chair and walked out of the room. His aunt, without waiting, according to her usual good habit, to think before she acted, also walked out of the room, and went direct to the school-room. She told the children that she wished to speak to Miss Burton, and that they might go to their grandmamma. Alone with Anna, she was not slow in beginning the subject nearest her heart; for when excited she was hasty by nature, and it was only by stern self-control that she had learnt to overcome this haste.

Anna felt that her hour was come, and tried to nerve herself for it. She trembled, but immediately cased herself in her pride, which was generally the armour of proof that she put on when any resistance to her will was likely to take place. She sat erect and haughty, with a slight glance of defiance in her eyes; whilst the Lady Georgiana, naturally a nervous woman, fidgeted with her gold chain, and looked perseveringly on her lap.

"Miss Burton," began the latter, carefully avoiding the defiant glance that she felt was ready to beam upon her, "my nephew, Captain Michelson, has given me to understand that he is engaged to you." Here she paused, as if expecting a reply from Anna; but receiving none, continued—"If this is the case, you will excuse my saying that it is so imprudent a thing, that it could not possibly meet with the approbation of any one member of our family." Another pause, but still no remark from Anna. "As this must have been carried on under my roof, I think it my duty to speak to you freely on the subject, and to tell you that I wholly disapprove of it, and that I consider you to have acted a very deceptive part."

"I can have been guilty of no deception," here burst forth Anna, "since I have not seen Captain Michelson alone more than once or twice since I have been with you: and it appears that, almost immediately after those two private interviews, he spoke to you upon the subject."

"Of course, Miss Burton, you are aware that Captain Michelson is wholly dependent on his father, and that he is not likely to approve of his son's marrying at present."

"I am perfectly well acquainted with Mr. Michelson's disapprobation of anything that his son

may like, and know him so well myself that I feel quite convinced he would never consent to my becoming his daughter-in-law."

"And would you be the means of severing father and son?"

"Your Ladyship is not probably aware that I have long been the means of severing father and son, and that without the fault either of Captain Michelson or myself; if indeed those may be called severed who were never united."

"I do not understand you, Miss Burton. I know that Mr. Michelson has quarrelled with Chatham, because he has refused to marry Miss Erskine on your account."

"I do not suppose that Captain Michelson would have married Miss Erskine even had he never had the misfortune to see me. But this is only the ostensible cause of Mr. Michelson's anger."

Anna was getting excited, and as her voice and colour rose Lady Georgiana glanced at her, and met her indignant eye. When two pair of indignant eyes meet, it is all over with temper and self-restraint.

"Mr. Michelson," continued Anna, "would have married me himself, and therefore was enraged at the thought of his son's doing so. He is a proud, vain pompous, selfish man, who never cared for

any one but himself; and I wonder how any person knowing him could even name him. He jilted my own aunt, and afterwards, in his own house, proposed for me, or rather, condescended to give me to understand that he was going to do me the honour of marrying me. I believe he soon found out that the Burtons have been for centuries a race of the true gentle blood, that scorn alike the vulgar condescension and the still more vulgar scorn of the great. We are poor, but we are proud; and in our native county no man would be considered to degrade himself by an alliance with the Burtons and Pynsents."

Lady Georgiana had never seen Anna in one of her magnificent moods before, and she was astonished. She felt moreover a little afraid of the young lady when she saw her flashing eyes and majestic air, and heard her rapid enunciation of the proud words she uttered. Still her usually mild Ladyship was not one to be easily put down when once she was set up. Your placid people rarely are: they generally manage to get the last and the best of a dispute. She let Anna have time to recover her breath, and then she said, somewhat hastily for her, "We are not speaking of degradation, Miss Burton, but of propriety; neither are we talking of what has been, but of what is. If

you were to use your judgment, you must know that Captain Michelson, with no income but his pay, would be doing a mad thing to marry any girl without fortune."

"I should think," said Anna, "that he is the best judge of what is good for him: he is of age, and his own master; therefore need not appeal either for advice or assistance to any of his relations. As to me, I am not without fortune. My father left my sister and myself a provision when we marry, because he did not choose that his daughters should be taken upon charity. I did not force myself upon Captain Michelson's notice: he sought me out, and has more than once wished me to engage myself to him; but I have refused. I told him that the Lady Georgiana Meredith would be the first to oppose his wishes; and I was right."

"You certainly were right; and I must further assure you that in my house I cannot allow this affair to proceed any further. At home, with your relations and guardians, you can of course act as you think proper."

"I understand you, Lady Georgiana. I knew you would dismiss me as soon as you found that Captain Michelson thought seriously of me. I am quite ready to go at once; tomorrow, if you will.

My slight services for the last two years have been sufficiently rewarded, and of course friendship could not exist where the disparity of rank and fortune is so great."

"You use harsh language, Miss Burton; but it does not alter my determination. If you are resolved to marry Captain Michelson, I again say that it is with the disapprobation of his family, and therefore I cannot permit him and you to remain together here."

"I have frequently heard your Ladyship talk of the power of strong mutual attachment to make life happy, and of the misery of married life without it: I have heard you instance yourself and your sister, Captain Michelson's mother, as examples of both cases; and I have heard you declare that, if no moral objection existed, you would never thwart your children's inclinations, or force them into an unnatural channel. You do not then carry your philanthropy beyond your home circle: you exclude your nephew and—and—your governess. If I were in any other position, you probably would admit me within the enchanted ring; but as I am, I am born to suffer, you suppose, and must bear my lot patiently. Do you not think that Captain Michelson may be made as miserable as his mother if he marry for rank and fortune;

and that I may be capable of as great happiness as you or your children if I marry for love?"

Lady Georgiana knew there was truth in all that Anna said, but she evaded her direct thrust by saying, as she rose and left the room, "We are both of us too much excited to talk calmly over this matter now. I will see you again, when you have considered it more coolly."

Whilst Anna reflected, in no very Christian spirit, upon Lady Georgiana's words, that lady went to her mother, and poured out all the grievances from beginning to end. The Countess heard her without interruption, and when she had finished allowed some little time to elapse before she spoke, in order to give her an opportunity of subduing the unnatural excitement that had taken possession of her mind. At last she said, "My dear Georgiana, I fear that you have been over-hasty, and unlike yourself. Remember that Miss Burton is young; that she is beautiful and of good birth; that she has never been used to unkindness or ungentle treatment; above all, that she is under our protection. How can you send a lady away from your house in such a manner and for such a cause? If she had a hundred lovers, and they were all brothers and nephews of yours, you could not do it, and would not, I am sure, had you considered be-

fore you spoke. You could not so dismiss a servant unless she had robbed you or committed some great moral misdemeanour. Miss Burton has done her duty by the children; has been kind and obliging to you; tender and affectionate to me, and I am not likely to forget it. She has conducted herself always as a lady, and has evidently struggled through much that was distasteful to her, in order to please us and improve the children. If Chatham has fallen in love with her, it is not her fault. I am quite sure that he has done it of his own accord; and I do not think it is her fault if she has returned his attachment. It is all simply very natural. Both young, handsome, agreeable, light-hearted, and ingenuous; neither counting costs or looking beyond the present moment. The fault is mine. Like a vain old fool, I thought Chatham had come and remained for my sake; whereas he had a stronger and more lovely attraction. Unsay, at least, what you have said about Miss Burton's quitting us at once, and we will think and talk of the rest another time. The flame is fanned by such hasty opposition, and you make them both enemies instead of friends."

Lady Georgiana had been always accustomed to listen to her mother's opinions with the utmost deference. She rarely contradicted her; and her

usual custom was, if she differed greatly with her, or felt irritated at anything she said, to leave her as soon as an opportunity offered. The truth was, that they were both of somewhat hasty temper, and both anxious to subdue it; so, rather than come to a dispute, they knew that a temporary separation was best; after which one or the other was sure to acknowledge herself in the wrong. In the present instance Lady Georgiana, being more than usually excited, felt much inclined to argue the point with her mother, but she knew that argument always injured the Countess; so she obtained the mastery over herself, and hastily and very unceremoniously withdrew to her own apartment.

It would have been curious for a stranger to peep into the different rooms on the second story of that large house, and glance at their inmates. In the first there is the Countess, in solitary confinement, looking grave, but not unhappy. In the second there is the Lady Georgiana, also in solitary confinement, under lock and key, walking up and down the room in no very agreeable mood, chafing under some ire that she is trying to reason down. In the third is Chatham, also in solitary confinement, with a face like a thunder-cloud, biting his nails, and vowing vengeance upon all his relations. In the fourth is Anna, also in solitary

confinement, under bolt and bar, crying and sobbing, more apparently from passion than from grief, since there is more of pride than sorrow in her countenance. In the fifth, the school-room, is the little Violet, creeping from Anna's door to the school-room with tears in her eyes, and evident indecision in her mind as to the propriety of demanding admission, and trying to comfort her afflicted friend. In the sixth is Rose, the only happy solitary of the party, playing with her doll, and watched by Ruth, her nurse, who is seated, also in solitary state, in the seventh and last apartment of the suite. Unlike the "seven wives" that the man met "going to St. Ives," or the seven giants who were all buried together, and all arose together at the sound of a certain bell,—these seven worthies evidently shun fellowship, and prefer loneliness to companionship.

Some time elapses before any outward change takes place. What revolution has been going on inwardly cannot be guessed. The Lady Georgiana is the first to give symptoms of a revulsion of feeling. She is seen to walk irresolutely down the passage, and to stop at the school-room door. Here she is soon met by Violet, who runs up to her, and asks, "What is the matter with Miss Burton, Mamma? She has been crying for a long time."

"Where is Miss Burton, Violet?" inquires the Lady Georgiana.

"In her room, Mamma."

Her Ladyship goes to the room, and hesitating as she reaches the door, colours, and trembles slightly as she knocks, and asks for admission.

"I will come shortly," says Anna from within.

"May I not come in for a few moments?" asks the Lady Georgiana.

The door opens; and Anna, with red eyes and clouded brow, admits her unwelcome visitor, who, going towards the fire, begins to fidget with an ornament on the mantelpiece. A hard struggle is going on within—that of pride with Christian love and charity. You see it in the workings of the sweet, pure countenance. Anna has also her struggle, but it is of pride over passion,—an effort to keep the bitter thoughts and feelings of the roused mind from utterance in words. Christian love and charity conquer. Would to God they always did! then should we enjoy a perpetual millennium in this now unholy world.

"Miss Burton," said the Lady Georgiana, still playing with the ornament on the mantelpiece, "I am very sorry that I should have hurt your feelings and offended you. I am still more sorry that I could have spoken to you in so thoughtless a

manner of leaving my house. Will you consider those words unsaid, and at least remain with us as long as shall be convenient and agreeable to you to do so? Perhaps, when we have all thought more calmly, and talked more quietly, we may come to a better understanding upon the grand subject of our dispute."

Oh, the sudden change in the face of Anna! Have you seen a frowning, cloud-capped rock instantaneously illuminated by sunshine? Have you remarked that the dark sides become bright, and glow with hues of red and gold,—that a thousand wild flowers, and pink and green mosses, and yellow lichens, before concealed, start into sight, perhaps glittering in diamond dewdrops? So was it with Anna. The cloud melted into the sunlight; the dewy tears, hitherto studiously concealed, gleamed upon the eyelashes, and the face grew radiant with grateful feeling. So true it is that kind words win the heart, as the flowers attract the bee, and make her forget her sting.

Anna was disarmed; she could not speak. But Lady Georgiana saw the change, and hastily added, to avoid seeming to expect conciliation or apologies—

"You will, I am sure, forgive what I said in the excitement of the moment. I am always sorry

when I allow sudden feeling or passion to make me forget that humility which our Saviour taught us."

"Can you forgive me?" murmured Anna. "I see now that I have been thoughtless, and rude, and unjust towards you. I am sorry, very sorry; but still I cannot change my intention. I have promised, and cannot allow you to suppose that I can ever alter."

"We will not renew the subject now," said the Lady Georgiana, again fidgeting with the ornament on the mantelpiece, and repressing a rising inclination to irritation; "I hope we shall meet again as usual." She held out her hand, and Anna pressed it lovingly.

"Do not think me ungrateful," said Anna; "I am not so at heart. I thank you for all your kindness, and for all your patience with me. Wherever I go, I shall always carry with me the remembrance of the consideration you have shown me, and the home you have given me."

Here Anna burst into tears. Lady Georgiana begged her to compose herself, but brushed a tear from her own eye as she did so; for she felt a sincere affection for the beautiful but wilful girl she saw before her. She thought quiet and reflection would be the best remedies for her agitation, so she again left her alone.

The evening was an awkward one to all but the Countess, who seemed very composed and happy, and who was more than usually kind to Anna. Chatham, who had industriously kept to his room all the afternoon, looked gloomy and out of temper; and that night, when they were all supposed to be at rest, a letter was brought by Ruth to Anna from him, written in no very kindly spirit. He urged her to marry him at once, and so to avoid all the pride and absurdity of his ridiculous, puritanical, and unnatural aunt,—for by all these epithets he called her.

Anna was now more unsettled in mind than ever, and was almost inclined to follow Lady Georgiana's wishes, and do away with the engagement altogether. But she was too much in love for such a sacrifice, and would not have had strength of mind to go through with it; so she resolved to see Chatham, and talk the matter over with him before she decided upon what course to pursue. She was supremely miserable; for not only did she feel that she had offended all her own friends, and acted ill by Nelson, but she was now causing Chatham to offend his friends, and to do unquestionably a foolish action.

The next day she had a long private interview with Chatham, understood and uninterrupted by

the family, during which she shed tears, and he grew angry, because she would not come to a decision. It was interrupted by the indefatigable doctor, who had come regularly twice a day to see his patient, and under whose surveillance Chatham was beginning to be really ill. After his departure Chatham went to see his grandmother, who drew from him, gently and judiciously, all his feelings for Anna. She saw that he was sincerely attached to her, and she did not reproach him for his attachment, or try to turn his mind from it by useless argument upon its folly. She listened, and having heard him to the end, she, to his surprise, simply asked him to ring the bell. When her maid came, she bade her ask Miss Burton to be kind enough to come to her. Anna appeared immediately, and blushed and hesitated as she saw Chatham.

"Come in, my dear," said the Countess, looking kindly at her. "But no; perhaps you will first tell Georgiana that I want her."

Anna obeyed, and soon returned with that lady.

"Come here!" said the Countess to Anna, pointing to the low stool at her feet, on which she had been once before seated; "I have something to say that nearly concerns you all. I am an old woman, and cannot, in the course of nature, be long in this

world; it would not have surprised me, had you and Chatham, reckoning upon my probable decease, and the five hundred a year that must come to him at that period, become secretly engaged to one another; neither would it have surprised me, had you wished for my death. I feel assured, on the contrary, that you would both rather keep me in this world, and be poor yourselves, than lose me; because I believe you both love me."

"Yes! oh, yes! yes!" murmured Chatham and Anna in a breath.

"Years ago, Chatham, your mother was sacrificed to Mammon. God only knows the anguish my great error has caused me; your father broke her heart. I have vowed before God, that if I could repair that error, or make any amends for it in this world, I would do so. I never thwarted the inclinations of my other child, and she, thank God, was happy in her married life. It seems to me now that, before I die, I may, in some sort, repair even to her my blindly-committed sin. If I can make you, her only child, happy, I shall die more at peace with myself, and shall believe that she will accept the reparation. Instead then of waiting until I die, for the small fortune that must come to you, I desire that you shall receive it at once, and, under my sanction, take Annabella

Burton for your wife. Stop! do not thank me yet; I have more to say. You are both young, inexperienced, and careless of money; the income you will have will not allow of any extravagance, and, unless Mr. Michelson relent, you are never likely to have it increased. You must therefore bear in mind that I give it you with the full expectation that you will live within it, and keep out of debt; if you are happy, I am content." Here the Countess put her hand on Anna's head, who was sobbing audibly. "This child will require thoughtful and loving treatment, Chatham; she and you are both undisciplined: you must help to discipline one another. Never allow coldness to estrange you. If you commit faults, which you surely will, do not conceal them from one another. Your dispositions are such, that you would soon be alienated if the ill-wind of deceit blow upon you. Remember the homely proverb, 'Avoid the first word.' It is the first word that leads to the second and the third, as it is the first step in everything that leads to consequences. I think I know you both well; and, with much that is good and amiable, you have much that, indulged, may make you unamiable and wretched. Help one another; God will help those who, in the married state, help each other. May He bless you both! and, when I am gone to

my rest, may you have reason to bless my memory for helping to bring you together!"

The tears stole down the cheeks of the aged Countess, as she concluded her address; and when Chatham went to Anna's side, and knelt down at his grandmother's feet, she put her hand on his head, and with patriarchal simplicity, again prayed to God to bless both her children. Anna was sobbing aloud, and ejaculating, "I do not deserve it; it cannot be; I am not worthy; you do not know," as she hid her face in the Countess's lap. Chatham's heart was too much touched to allow of his uttering words; but when he rose from his knees, he put his arms round his grandmother's neck, and, whilst he kissed her tenderly, let his grateful but still manly tears fall on her cheek.

Meanwhile, the Lady Georgiana drew near to the sobbing Anna, and stooping over her, whispered again in her ear an entreaty for forgiveness for her unkind words of the previous day.

"It is I, it is I," still sobbed Anna, "who must ask forgiveness: I do not deserve it; I cannot bear this kindness."

Who has not found kindness harder to bear than unkindness, as Anna did? She could utter no thanks; she could not even raise her head to her friend and benefactress: she could only shed

tears at her feet, in token of the gratitude she felt; and when they gently led her to her room, and left her alone there, still she wept as she had never wept before. Joy, sorrow, remorse, a sudden consciousness of her own feelings, and of the weight of undeserved benefits cast upon her, all made her feel that intense pain in pleasure, which is more difficult to bear than actual grief. Happy she must soon have been, had not the recollection of Nelson haunted her at every moment. Alas! so it ever is! the one dark shadow of evil must overcast the good. If we have permitted ourselves one bad action, one deceit, one glaring ingratitude, it is when we are happiest that it comes between us and our joy, to embitter the present, and darken the past. Had not Anna been weak and false enough to engage herself to one she did not love, she would not have been called upon to break her engagement, and would now have been the happiest of human beings in the love of Chatham, and the friendship and approbation of his relatives. But one spot was on the snow; one cloud on the sun; one blight upon the flower.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I never saw a bridal but my eyelid hath been wet;
And it always seem'd to me as though a joyous crowd were met
To see the saddest sight of all, a gay and girlish thing
Lay aside her maiden gladness for a name and for a ring."

G. M. Fitzgerald.

"Anna has behaved very dishonourably, and very ill," said Pynsent Burton to his sister Jessie; "look at her conduct in whatever light you will, it cannot be made clear or clean."

"We are all faulty, Pynsent," said Jessie, "and poor Anna was never strong at overcoming her inclinations, whatever they may be; but she is your sister, and you, as her natural guardian, must act a brother's part by her."

"I should be sorry to consider myself her guardian, Jessie," said Pynsent, shrugging his shoulders, "or to have the weight of her indiscretions upon me: I am glad I am not her godfather."

"But, Pynsent, you must, if only out of respect to those who have so nobly acted by her, accept this invitation: you must go to her wedding."

"How can I countenance the marriage of one who has jilted my dearest friend, and probably made him miserable, and certainly made him a misanthrope for life? I tell you, Jessie, that Nelson will never recover the shock he has received. He shuns me as if I was some wild animal. He has never been here since the fatal letter. He scarcely speaks to his own father; and, although two months have elapsed since it took place, he looks as ill and wretched as he did the first night."

"I know it; at least I can guess it all, Pynsent," said Jessie with tears in her eyes, "still we must do our duty by Anna. It must not be said that our sister was allowed to be married amongst strangers, and none of her own family there to countenance and support her. I knew she never loved Nelson, and, believe me, it is all for the best; she would have made him miserable."

"I know that, and I know that he was a fool to think of her; but I saw he conceived a passion for her—I cannot suppose it was love—from the first evening that he saw her after his return. I wish to heaven she had been as ugly as sin."

"She is what God made her, Pynsent, and when married, will, I hope, be prudent and happy."

"Then Captain Michelson must rule her with a rod of iron," exclaimed Pynsent.

"Oh, Pynsent! you always mistake Anna; she is only to be led by kindness; and I am thankful to say, Captain Michelson is most gentle and kind-hearted. But, the wedding! It is impossible for me to go alone, who never travelled in my life. It is evident that the Countess and her daughter are bent on my being present, and on having as many of her family as possible. You are most especially invited by all parties. Nothing can exceed the interest the family take in Anna; and the letter of the Countess to me, in which she insists on defraying all the expenses of my journey, is most considerate."

"Humph!" said Pynsent, "I suppose we can raise a ten-pound note for this purpose."

"Not so easily, Pynsent, since you know how difficult it is to raise Anna's thousand pounds; and we are both agreed in resolving that she shall have it."

"Assuredly! My father willed it, and, thank goodness, we have never touched the money laid by from year to year, ever since his death, for the accumulation of that sum. Michelson has behaved very handsomely in refusing it, but, small as it is, she must have it, even though we starve for it."

"We shall not be able to reduce Mr. Skinner's debt this year," said Jessie: "the hundred pounds

we have saved for him must go towards Anna's thousand. How fortunate it is, that Captain Burford was such a careful man himself, and, at the same time, so interested in us, that he began at once to lay by for these portions!"

"Captain Burford is one in a thousand," said Pynsent. "He, too, despite his joy at the match being broken off, is very unhappy about Nelson. I fear they have quarrelled, and unless something occurs to reconcile them, will part unpleasantly."

"Part!" echoed Jessie.

"Yes, I have just heard that Nelson is determined to return at once to India."

"So much the better!" said Jessie; "as long as he is here he will only mope and be morose, but, actively employed, he may be better."

"And *you* say this?" asked Pynsent in astonishment.

"Certainly," replied Jessie, colouring. "But let us return to Anna. The Countess says she trusts as many of her relations as possible will be present at the wedding, particularly her eldest brother. What an angel that old lady must be! She acts upon what I have so often thought, and says that she prefers making two people happy during her lifetime, to letting them wish for her death."

"I wish I had such a grandmother," said Pynsent solemnly. "Do you think I could persuade Aunt Betsey to such a sacrifice?"

"You are so foolish, Pynsent. Will you persuade yourself to sacrifice your own unkind feelings, and go with me into Wales?"

"Do you think there is any chance of this angel of a Countess giving up her other five hundred a year to her daughter? and finally, do you think the Lady Georgiana will marry me? The daughter of an earl ran away with a young doctor the other day, and why should not I be one of Fortune's favourites? I will send to London for a suit of new clothes upon the chance, and come out in boots no bigger than a Chinese lady's. By the bye, Jessie, it is nothing but tight boots that caused Miss Maxwell's lameness. What with tight stays and tight boots, we shall not have a young lady left to console us for the ills of life I mean to write a treatise—"

"Now, Pynsent, be serious: will you go to Anna's wedding?"

"Of course he will!" shouted Captain Burford, entering suddenly; "I would go myself if it wasn't for Nelson. I really do not know what is the matter with the lad, and, by Neptune, I am come

to make a clean breast of it, and show you the "head and tail of my offending."

"Head and front," suggested Pynsent.

"It's all the same," growled the Captain; "*af*-front would be better still. There now, let me sit down first, and spread out my sails a little."

"Tails," again suggested Pynsent, "coat-tails, just as the ladies spread out their dresses."

"It is a long yarn, but I shall be better when it is spun. When that confounded little jilt of an Anna wrote that letter, Nelson and I were sitting very cozily over the fire. I was making a conscience to myself to try to speak cheerfully about his marriage with Anna, and from the wrong side of my mouth bawling out a few lies; because you you know very well, Jessie, that I always meant him for you—but that's over, I'm afraid. Nelson was very merry, and seemed pleased at my having taken this turn. The truth was, I saw it was no good to keep to the other tack, so I shifted. He was getting confidential, and we were better friends than we had been for some time. Down came the postman's rap louder than usual. I suppose Nel expected a letter, for he jumped up and answered the door himself. I knew by the joy on his face that it was from Anna. He sat down and opened the letter. I watched him as he read it, feeling

angry that a mere child should have been able to obtain such power over a steady, grave fellow. I watched him anxiously enough as he read on; for such a change in a human countenance I never remember to have seen. First he became as pale as death; then he knitted his brow and pressed his teeth and lips closely together; and finally, he seemed as if every muscle of his face became contracted. When he had read to the end, he turned the letter and began it again, as if to make sure of its contents. But I could bear it no longer, seeing his face grow darker and darker every moment. 'For God's sake, what is the matter, Nel?' said I. He did not answer. I spoke to him again; but he only shook his head, covered his forehead with his hand, and read on. When he came to the end of the letter again, he groaned slightly. 'Nelson, for God's sake, what is the matter?' said I. He put the letter into my hand, and sat watching me in turn, whilst I read it; which I did as well as I could, for it was vilely written. I suppose the joy I felt, when I found that Anna had fairly broken off the engagement, must have been visible on my countenance. You know, my dear, I could not pretend to be sorry when it was the happiest thing that could have happened to me—so I thought at least. I believe

I made sundry ejaculations as I proceeded, such as 'Quite right!' when she said she had done wrong to accept him; 'Little flirt! little jilt!' when she said her affections were another's; 'Pshaw! nonsense!' when she spoke of Nelson's feelings; and 'The deceitful little baggage!' when she alluded to her own. But the truth was, I was downright overjoyed at the letter, and when I had spelt it through, I could not help shouting 'Hurrah, boys!' or some such thing, and getting up and going across to Nelson, and holding out my hand to shake hands with him, saying, 'Bravo, Nel! now you see I was right!' Deuce take it, why did I think of right or wrong at such a time? but we are always so glad to find ourselves right. 'She isn't worth a thought,' said I; 'Jessie is worth a hundred of her. You'll be very glad by-and-by. Shake hands, boy, and let us be friends again.' But he did not shake hands. He looked at me as if he thought I was a demon, and said with a voice as hoarse as a wolf's, 'Father, are you a brute?' and, snatching up the letter, went out of the room. Now those words, 'Father, are you a brute?' have haunted me ever since. I can't forgive them. They are the first ill words he ever said to me, God knows; but I shall never forget them. 'A brute!' I, who have thought of

nothing but his good all his life, and only rejoiced about Anna because I knew it was best for him. Well, we have scarcely spoken since that day, indeed we seldom meet. He looks ill and wretched, and mopes and frets. I am sorry for him, but cannot get over those words. He doesn't think about them, I dare say, only of Anna. He has been away twice, and this morning is gone again. He left word that he should be back in a few days, and told me abruptly at breakfast—the only words he spoke—that he should return to India in about six weeks. I made no reply. I tried, but 'the brute' stuck in my throat. He ought to apologize for such a speech. He must: I can never have any pleasure with him again till he has; and I am sure I have no pleasure in myself, or anybody else, whilst he is making up his mind. He looks so ill, it is dreadful to see him. I could never have believed that a woman could have made such work with a sober, sedate fellow like Nelson; but women are at the bottom of all the mischief that ever was done in the world, from its foundation to the present time;—from Mother Eve to Daughter Anna they are all alike, and men are their dupes and victims. You are an exception, you know, Jessie; I always look upon you as a pattern to your sex. And now, little counsellor, what are

we to do with Nelson? Pynsent, what is your opinion?"

"That I could not have believed it possible that Nelson could have been such a fool!" growled Pynsent. "He must get over it soon; he has too much good sense to allow a disappointment of this kind to prey upon his mind."

"I am afraid," said Jessie, "that he has too much feeling to allow him to forget it."

"But the question is, what are we to do to set him and me to rights again?" asked the Captain. "I shall leave it to you, Jessie, and I will abide by whatever you advise. Heigho! who would have thought that such a dutiful boy could ever have called his father a brute?"

"But my dear Captain Burford," said Jessie gently, "you must think of the provocation. Nelson had been already injured past endurance, and then you, by seeming to rejoice in his pain, put the finishing stroke to his distress."

"Fiddlestick's end, my dear! He must have known that I was not rejoicing in his pain, but merely in his having got rid of a matrimonial engagement that I did not consider suitable for him. Anna was just as much calculated to make him happy, as the King of the Cannibal Islands would be to make her happy, or as *he* would be to

make her happy; and if he hadn't been worse than intoxicated all the time, he would have known it. *Et tu Brute!* Just read Cæsar's dying words—*Brute* instead of *Brutus*—and you will have Master Nelson's apostrophe. I know he thought me a brute when he said so."

"It was only the excitement of the moment," said Jessie; "and think what he must have felt, to be so aroused."

"Very well, my dear; I leave it all to you. You must see what can be done to bring us together; but remember, I make no concessions. There is one comfort, when one thinks that 'twill be all the same a hundred years hence. And now Pynsent, my boy, you must absolutely go to Anna's wedding: your father's daughter shall not be married without the countenance of her relations."

"But I should not know what to do amongst all those grand people. I assure you, Captain, I should feel like the cow in the china-shop, or the pig in the drawing-room,—very ill at my ease."

"Not more so than I," suggested Jessie. "The very words 'Countess' and 'Lady Georgiana' make me tremble: I am sure I shall not know how to behave. You must go, if only to support me."

"Uncle Timothy will support you," said Pyn-

sent; "but I could no more witness Anna's marriage with Captain Michelson after her conduct to Nelson than I could—what simile shall I bring? —yours with old Skinner."

"You do not mean seriously to declare that you will not accompany me into Wales?" said Jessie in alarm.

"I would do anything in the world for you, Jessie," replied Pynsent; "and if you are really afraid to travel alone, I will go to the town with the unpronounceable name and ten consonants, that Anna designates 'our post town,' with you; but you must then excuse my going further. Remember my patients."

"That would be adding insult to injury," said Jessie, looking vexed. "I always knew you were obstinate and determined, but I never thought you absolutely cruel and unkind before."

"There is the misfortune of boys being left young with nobody to control them," said Captain Burford. "Pynsent has had too much of his own way all his life, and now he is as pig-headed as I am, who was left just similarly circumstanced."

"You may pull me to pieces, or make mince of me between you," said Pynsent, "but all the abuse you can utter will not make me go to Anna's wedding. I love her, and would do all in my power

to serve her, but I will not compromise with conscience: I do not approve of her conduct, and I will not countenance it."

"I hope you will never have children, Pynsent," said Jessie; "you would make a severe father."

"You need not trouble yourself about that, my dear, for I never mean to marry. You and I will live together as old bachelor and old maid, without interlopers."

Pynsent remained firm in his resolution. Jessie exhausted all her stock of ill-temper and teasing upon him in vain. Aunt Betsey was vituperative, Uncle James argumentative, Captain Burford authoritative, but Mr. Pynsent continued obstinate. Jessie therefore, with much inward perturbation, started alone.

As she had never been more than twenty miles from home in her life before, the journey was a nervous matter, and the preparations for the visit to the grand place had been nervously made. She was met on the road by her Uncle Timothy, who came laden with presents for the bride elect. He was most anxious to learn the particulars of Anna's change of bridegrooms, having heard of her engagement to Nelson; but Jessie smoothed the matter over as well as she could, and good simple Uncle Timothy contented himself with a shake of

the head and an ejaculation that young people seldom knew their own minds.

They were most hospitably received at Plas Ayron, where they found every one engaged in preparations for the wedding, which was to be quiet, but in all things suitable. Jessie and Anna met in great embarrassment: neither knew what to say. Jessie did not like to make Anna unhappy, therefore concealed her own feelings; and Anna felt so much like a culprit when she was alone with her, that she scarcely dared to show any feeling at all. By mutual consent they avoided speaking of Nelson, although Jessie at least thought of no one else. Anna felt and knew the reason of her brother Pynsent's absence, and was more hurt by it than she cared to acknowledge, though she was aware that she deserved it. The Countess told Jessie that she did not think her sister was in such good spirits as, under all the circumstances, she might have been. Jessie excused her by saying that excitable people often became depressed under great happiness. She felt as if she was acting or countenancing a falsehood by not avowing the true cause of Anna's depression. The Countess also said that she had made it a matter of favour with Anna to be married at Plas Ayron, because she wished to be an eyewitness of her happi-

ness and that of her nephew. Both the Countess and Lady Georgiana were charmed with the simplicity and good sense of Jessie, and the old-fashioned politeness and gentlemanlike bearing of Uncle Timothy. The latter was visiting Lady Georgiana's sick people the very day after his arrival, and making great friends with Violet and Rose, to whose especial care he was consigned. The wedding was to take place on the third day.

Captain Michelson and a brother officer, Colonel Campion, arrived the evening previous to the event. A select party of neighbours were invited to the breakfast, and all was conducted according to the strictest notions of propriety and etiquette. It must not be forgotten that the Countess had written to Mr. Michelson, informing him of all that she intended to do, and, in a civil way, soliciting his countenance. As may be imagined, Mr. Michelson's reply to her letter was harsh and unkind,—that is to say, harsh and unkind in reality, but most smoothly worded. He said that as Chatham was marrying contrary to his wishes, he could not be expected to countenance his union. He wished him well, and hoped he would be happy, but as an undutiful son he feared no blessing could rest upon him. The Countess tore his letter indignantly to pieces, and thereupon comforted her con-

science by thinking that such a father could not be included in the Fifth Commandment.

A word of the wedding we must say, because everybody likes to hear of weddings. It was a beautiful April day, and the sun shone, and soft breezes blew on it, despite the misdemeanours of the bride. The greatest beauty-sceptic in the world could not have denied the extreme loveliness of Anna in the white veil and orange wreath. She was attired in every way befitting the grand-daughter of a Countess. But who could have thought of the attire when gazing on the face and form beneath? Everybody said that Anna was born to be a queen, so regally she looked. Jessie had a wee bridesmaid on each side, the little Violet and Rose, and Uncle Timothy gave the bride away, and seemed pleased and cheerful.

The rustic church in the park, with its white, flower-beplanted graves, and ivy-covered arches, was just the place for such a wedding. The Lady Georgiana's school-children were in attendance, strewing flowers, according to the most approved custom, and there were triumphal arches at every hundred yards. An old friend of the Countess's, a dignitary of the Church, performed the ceremony, and was heard to declare afterwards that he had never married so handsome a couple. Anna be-

haved with the utmost self-possession. She looked flushed, but shed no tears. Jessie, on the contrary, wept copiously, as did the little bridesmaids; wherefore, they scarcely knew; but I imagine because there is something so sacred and solemn in the marriage ceremony, and so grave in the union of two human beings "till death them do part," that it affects even the young and thoughtless.

That Chatham and Anna were supremely happy, no one could doubt; still, when they visited the aged Countess in her boudoir, and received her affectionate embrace and blessing as man and wife, their feelings overcame them. But it was not until Anna found herself alone with Jessie during the interval allowed for a change of attire that she entirely gave way. Then, clasped in the arms of that mother-sister, she sobbed convulsively. Why? it may be asked. Because she was about to part with her for years, and perhaps for ever; and because she knew that she had come between her and her happiness.

"Jessie, dearest Jessie," she sobbed, "can you forgive me? Now, before I go away, let me tell you that I know I have been selfish, wicked, ungrateful; that I have destroyed your happiness, and ruined that of Nelson. Without me you would both have been happy. If you can, tell him that

I am conscious how ill I have acted: not in breaking off the engagement,—that was right,—but in forming it. Tell Pynsent that I feel that he was just in refusing to come; but oh, not kind, not brotherly. You are the only one true and good, and forgiving and angelic, amongst us. May God bless you, Jessie, darling, darling sister! If I had been always with you, I might have been good. It is the consciousness of so many undeserved benefits that makes me wretched. Had you all been unkind, had I been justly punished for my deceit, I could have borne it; but to be happy beyond my most sanguine wishes makes my heart ready to burst. Pray for me, Jessie, and write—write. I will try to be worthier of you than I have been."

Jessie held her sister to her heart, and wept with her. She could only murmur, "I—I have nothing to forgive; God bless you, Anna!" and offer up silent prayers that she might be led to find that peace and strength of mind which the Spirit of God alone can bestow.

No one was surprised at the traces of tears and agitated manner of Anna when she made her appearance below, in her travelling dress. Everybody knew that she was about to part from a dear sister and kind friends, and would have wondered if she had not wept.

Just before the carriage came round that was to convey the "happy couple" on a short tour through North Wales, previously to their final settlement in or near barracks—if, indeed, you can call such a settlement final—Chatham put a sealed packet into Jessie's hand, saying, that it was a little joint remembrance from him and Anna, and that she must not open it until they were gone. They departed amongst the cheers of the servants, and the blessings and good wishes of the family and guests. Jessie was obliged to retire for a few moments, to dry her eyes, and conquer her rebellious feelings. She opened the packet, and therein found the £1000 in bank-notes, that she had brought with her as Anna's dower, accompanied by letters from Chatham and Anna, begging that it might be employed towards paying off the remaining part of the mortgage upon Fairfield. Chatham said that he had burnt all the horrid law papers connected with the money, and that no arguments or entreaties should make him receive it again. Jessie could not but feel grateful and glad at this act of munificence, because it not only showed the affectionate nature of her brother-in-law, but also enabled her nearly to accomplish what she had been so long struggling to perform.

Uncle Timothy left the following morning, but Jessie remained a week at Plas Ayron, induced

thereto by the entreaties of her new friends, who had taken a great fancy to her. It was rumoured amongst them that Colonel Campion, who also stayed behind, was more than half in love with the unsophisticated Jessie, he having been heard to say, that he had never met with so much simplicity and good sense combined in any woman before. He also greatly admired her clear, truthful eyes, and repeated what had been said of her before, that no man could possibly tell a lie in her presence. When the Lady Georgiana hinted to her Colonel Campion's admiration, and the barely possible result, Jessie got into a great fright, and in her usual straightforward manner assured Lady Georgiana that she never meant to marry, and should be greatly distressed if she thought any one would ask her. She also managed—neither she nor the Colonel knew how—to make him fully understand something of the kind; for if he had conceived any serious intentions, he abandoned them; still affirming that she was the most charming specimen of frankness and simplicity he had ever beheld, and withal the most naturally ladylike person, although devoid of the accomplishments he had been accustomed to admire.

The Countess said of her, "If there were a few more such girls in the world, to become wives and mothers, what a different world it would become!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly she herself had suffered—'Perish in thy self contempt!'
Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither with despair."

TENNYSON.

SEATED at her bureau, with a very unromantic-looking ledger before her, Jessie found herself, a few weeks after her return from the wedding, forgetting her accounts, and soliloquizing something after this fashion. It must not be supposed that she spoke aloud, but her thoughts ran on in this current:—

"I must do something,—but what? They must not part in anger, and Captain Burford is evidently growing more aggrieved every day. If Nelson would come here! But never to have seen him since the letter, is worse than fifty painful interviews. It used to be just the same when he was a boy. He always moped, or as they called it, sulked, until I reasoned with him gently; and then he

would soon see the right, and overcome his temper. Can I not recall a thousand such instances, ever since our earliest childhood?—quarrels, above all, with Pynsent, when neither would own himself wrong, until I interfered, and brought both to their senses; and then they came to me to settle differences, and consult upon plans. And now, to be avoided, and perhaps dreaded! But is he not as dear, or dearer to me than ever? Do I not know that his heart is the firmest and truest in the world? and shall I let it break, or corrode without an effort to save? Shall pride, or false shame, or fancied delicacy, prevent my seeing whether the old influence is quite gone? What if he knows that I *love him?* I love his father; I love Pynsent; I love others: they know it; I do not mind their knowing it; why should I fear his knowing it: I who have been called his little wife—his sister—alternately, for years and years? We can never be more to one another now, than we are, and have been. May I not still be the true friend, the tender sister? But what would the world think? what would he think? What matters it, if my own conscience is clear? Is life long enough, or its duration secure enough, to waste it in these vain cavils? I am sure that we ought to do all the good we can in this world; and there cannot be a

greater good than to reconcile a father and son, and to raise up a drooping spirit;—but I—can I do this? With God's help, I can; at least, I can try. He must not go away from amongst us without, at least, having kindly feelings towards us. Scarcely more than a twelvemonth ago he returned so happy: and now to go back to India so miserable! And they talk of war in India. Perhaps he may never see us again. His father! he would never forgive himself. At least I will try. May I have courage given me for the attempt, and words put into my heart to speak!"

And so Jessie rose from her bureau, closed her ledger, and shut it in. Then she put on her bonnet and shawl, her heart beating and her hands trembling as she did so. This accomplished, she went to Aunt Betsey, and begged her to detain Captain Burford when he came in from his walk with Uncle James, until she came home from the town, whither she was going. Finally, she called her dog, Sandy, the terrier Nelson had given her, and they set out together.

In due course of time they reached Captain Burford's house, the street-door of which being open, Jessie went in without ringing. She stood some time in the hall, endeavouring to collect her thoughts, and to arrange the long speeches she had

been composing on the road; but they seemed all to have vanished from her mind. Her little terrier grew very impatient, and began to snap and bark, and tug at the skirt of her dress, and to make so much noise that he evidently caused some one to open the library door and look out. This was Nelson, who, perceiving Jessie, appeared astonished, and seemed, for a moment, uncertain as to the propriety of retiring again. They advanced to meet each other however, shook hands, and went into the library. Neither of them spoke, but fortunately the delight of Sandy at seeing Nelson, rendered words unnecessary. He first began a series of leaps that demanded attention, and finally a succession of barks; and then an attack upon Nelson's boot, that used to be a favourite amusement, and was now a very fortunate accomplishment. At last he ceased his gyrations, and retired to Jessie's side, who had been engaged in studying the painful alteration of Nelson's face. She could scarcely have believed that a few months without actual disease, could have so changed the human countenance. It was not pallor, or emaciation, but its dark, morbid, forbidding expression. Jessie felt a sudden fear of Nelson. The stern brow, in which there seemed to be a resolution to suppress mortified feeling; and the rigid mouth where pride

and reserve blended, appeared at once to repel all human love and sympathy. She tried once or twice to speak, but could not, and it was well for her that Nelson occupied himself with the dog. At last the silence became so awkward that Jessie said the very thing she ought not to have said, and which she felt to be a deceit, which was—

"Where is your father?"

"I do not know," was the reply.

The voice was as much changed as the face.

There was another pause, which Nelson broke.

"Will you not sit down and rest, Jessie?"

The little word 'Jessie' brought a sudden flush to her cheek, and almost a tear to her eye.

"Thank you. What warm weather it is for May!" she said, by way of saying something.

"Very," said Nelson, "it is quite summer."

What a blessed scapegoat that weather is! With a weight of love, anguish, anxiety, counsel, and strong, vehement speech, lying on the heart, and ready for the lips, two friends, whose very life, perhaps, depends on the words spoken, begin to talk of the weather. Who has not often wished the weather at New Zealand, yet, like Jessie, felt it impossible to call up any other subject?

"I think we shall have thunder," said Jessie, hating herself for her folly.

"There does seem to be a good deal of electricity in the air," replied Nelson.

Another pause, and Jessie stooped to stroke and quiet Sandy; who, not liking the unusual silence, was beginning to fidget with the skirt of her dress again.

"You return to India next week?" suggested Jessie with a trembling voice.

"I *sail* next week," said Nelson, with a slight emphasis on the word 'sail.' He had rather a habit of quietly correcting errors in speaking, and his doing so now gave Jessie courage. She smiled.

"I do not know what your father will do when you are gone," she said.

"Very well, doubtless," replied Nelson gravely; and an additional shade fell on his face.

Another pause. Was this Nelson? Jessie asked herself. Assuredly not the Nelson she had known, therefore she could have nothing to do with him; still she must not give him up, for his father's sake.

"Nelson!" she ejaculated softly, glancing into his face.

"Well, Jessie!" he replied, avoiding a second encounter of the *truthful* eye. Like Homer, we must keep to our distinguishing epithet.

"You will not go away from us with unkind and

unfriendly feelings towards us?" said Jessie, forcing out the sentence as if each word was a leaden ball; but being much relieved when they were discharged.

Nelson was silent.

"You have been much aggrieved, Nelson: but it should not quite break up the friendship of a life, or—or—stifle the love of a son."

Jessie felt that she had fairly started, and trembled all over. She waited to see whether her words would produce any effect, but there was none visibly.

"Nelson, you will not go away in anger?"

"Not with you," said Nelson; "you could never cause anger."

"But with others?"

"They are different."

"For so many years—perhaps for ever? Think, Nelson. A time will surely come when you would give all you possess in the world never to have said such words. It must be bad to part from those who are nothing to us in anger—but from those who love us—"

"Love us!" echoed Nelson, with an emphasis so bitter that it made Jessie start; "who loves us? Those who rejoice when we are most wretched, or those who make us wretched?"

"Both—all. You cannot know how well, because you will not."

"I judge by actions. I have been deceived, laughed at, and insulted, by those who professed to love me; and I believe in the word no more."

"Will you permit me to say what I have at heart, and forgive me if I wound you? and will you believe that all I say is with a good motive, and for your happiness and that of others?"

"Jessie, you alone of all the world may say what you like to me, and feel assured that your motives will never be misunderstood by me: but if you think to reconcile me to life, my friends, or myself, you deceive yourself."

"God forbid, Nelson!" said Jessie, the tears starting into her eyes. "But to this love in which you do not believe circumstances have blinded your eyes. I must begin at the beginning, and show you how you have deceived yourself. I must wound you, or rather probe the wound, I hope the better to heal it. Anna loved you, still loves you —as—as her own brother."

"Take care, Jessie!" interrupted Nelson; "remember, you wake a fiend."

"I know—I feel," said Jessie, frightened by his manner, "but we cannot command our affections in another sense."

Poor Jessie! as she proceeded, her own cheeks grew crimson, and her voice faltered painfully.

"Anna was young and heedless—she thought it well to marry; and she loved you—yes, but not as she should have loved you to become your wife. She found this out when too late, and in the impetuosity of her feelings, wrote you that letter. I do not exculpate her—she was wrong, very wrong: but she knew that she was wrong, and confessed and suffered for it."

"Suffered!" exclaimed Nelson bitterly; "Anna suffer! She never thought of any one but herself, and her own momentary gratification. Coquette! jilt!"

"Yet she has suffered, and for your sake!" said Jessie gently.

"I want no one to suffer for me," said Nelson proudly. "Let her be as happy as she may with him she has chosen; but I should feel insulted by her thinking of me."

"Yet she begged me to entreat your forgiveness; to assure you how conscious she is of her ill-conduct, and to say she feels that she is not worthy of you."

"I wonder you use that hackneyed phrase on such an occasion. Who thinks of the relative worth of the parties in such a case? But she is

right, Jessie. A heartless jilt is worthy of no man of honour and principle."

"Oh, Nelson! think of the thoughtless child you used to play with—the pride you used to be amused with at nine years old, when you little thought of these evil days—the merry hours we had with her, when she made her early conquests—and do not be too hard upon her at nineteen, whom you helped to spoil at nine."

"It is my own folly that I despise the most. To love such a heedless, vain, deceitful girl; to have been taken by beauty and the fascination of manner, and all the outward charms that my judgment has always taught me to consider secondary: above all, to have loved her so blindly, when I felt that she did not care for me as I did for her; I, who had watched her greater love for another. Oh, fool! madman!"

"But every one must love her, Nelson; she was born for it: and do we not, instinctively, love all that is beautiful? The brightest, fairest flowers, the most glorious sunsets, the most brilliant moonlights?"

"No, I think not. I love the violet for its perfume—I have always loved best the most quiet and unpretending things, until now."

Here a quick new pang shot through Nelson's

heart. He remembered that he had once loved Jessie; that boyish, but true, holy feeling that had been so much the best. He glanced at her as she stood, agitated and pale, before him, and thought of what had been. Jessie felt the look, and with a quick perception of the truth, changed the immediate subject of conversation.

"Your father is unhappy about you, Nelson," she said, more abruptly than she intended.

"Has he been complaining?" asked Nelson, with the brow again knitting that had been less overcast during the last few minutes.

"You know he always tells me everything," said Jessie simply.

"Then you know that he rejoices at my pain, and is angry at my feeling aggrieved. He is unnatural, and I cannot believe he cares for me."

"You must make allowances for his temper and frame of mind: you always did before."

"He was never heartless and cruel before."

"He did not think Anna suited to you; and he felt a momentary pleasure at your being free from her. But he heartily repents having let you perceive it: indeed, indeed he does."

"He is morose and sullen with me—scarcely speaks to me—and yet you say he repents!"

"Do you repent, Nelson? It is not for the father to make excuses to the son."

"Repent of what?—of loving too blindly and too well? Yes, from the bottom of my heart, though the love is still there, and will never be rooted out."

Jessie smothered a sigh as she said—

"But your words? was there nothing to repent of in them—your own father?"

"What words? we have scarcely spoken since."

"The one involuntary exclamation, which seems to have had such an effect upon him."

"I remember none—I made none. What do you mean?"

"Just as your father had read the letter, and thoughtlessly shouted 'Hurrah, boys!' which you know is only a way he has—"

"I assure you, Jessie, that I remember nothing after that moment, except that I went to my room and suffered more intolerable agonies than I ever endured before. What does my father say?"

"That you refused his offered hand."

"Of course I did; was I to congratulate myself on being made wretched? What more?"

"And that you said, 'Are you a brute, father?' looked at him as if you thought him worse than a brute, left him, and have scarcely spoken to him since."

"Could I have said such a thing? I assure you, Jessie, it must have escaped in the agony of the moment, as I am quite unconscious of having spoken at all; though I remember feeling much hurt, and thinking my father worse than cruel."

"I thought so," said Jessie, relieved of a weight of uncertainty, "but your father,—he heard you say the words, and does not know but that you meant them."

"And so I undoubtedly did, little thinking that I had given utterance to my feelings; and I still say that he was unkind and unnatural."

"But he did not intend to be so, Nelson; he says he did not, and you must not leave him under the impression that he did; nor must you leave him with the notion in his mind that he has an unnatural son; it would make him wretched for life."

"I have no desire to do so; but I am in no mood to conciliate, or enter upon long explanations."

"May I not say something for you? I have done so before successfully; for your father always listens to reason."

"To *your* reason, Jessie; who would not? because you have always justice and charity on your side. You may say what you like; I know you will neither say too much nor too little."

"It is only needful to speak the truth in this, as in all other instances," said Jessie; "truth is always best in the end."

"It is a pity that everybody does not speak it as boldly, yet as gently, as you do!" said Nelson, the deep shadow again falling on his face: "how could two sisters be so different?"

"Anna would not tell a lie," said Jessie quickly.

"But she will act one," said Nelson. "However, Jessie, you have taken some trouble, and I know put yourself into an unpleasant strait to do me a service, simply because you thought it right. I will say one thing to you: I am more to blame than Anna in this matter; I knew that she did not love me; I knew that a reserved, steady, unattractive fellow, such as I am, was unfit for a sparkling, accomplished, lovely creature, like Anna; just as much so as her giddiness, coquetry, and love of admiration were unsuited to me; yet I was selfish fool enough to take advantage of her evidently temporary rupture with another and more attractive lover, to press my suit. I saw she accepted me because she wanted to be free from teaching; I knew that you perceived that she did not care a straw for me: I was aware of it all, but I resolutely blinded my eyes, and closed up my ears, to prevent myself from seeing and hearing

more; and to try to shut out what I had already seen and heard. I did so; how, Heaven knows. I was happy,—madly happy; and now the blind is taken from the eyes, and the wool from the ears, and I am wretched in proportion. Her image haunts me day and night, and will till I die. I pray that I may get into battle as soon as I am in India, to put an end to the torture."

"Oh, Nelson! is this you?" said Jessie, greatly shocked.

"You would not have believed it, would you? Nor should I; but so it is: I suppose we who have not strong passions generally, are the most torn by them, when they do take possession of us. My whole mind has had a revolution, and will never recover its equilibrium."

"Do not say so," said Jessie; "we are taught where to find a cure in all diseases of the mind, even more surely than in bodily ones. Do not forget Him who will in no wise cast out those who come to Him. Disappointments are sent us for our good, to strengthen, not to weaken, the heart and understanding."

"Jessie, reason and the Bible make me agree with you, but my own will turns me aside. I am not, I fear, so religious as I was when I went into the Army; my faith has been shaken, I scarcely

know how; and the Bible that my father gave me has not been read as it ought to have been."

"I have read in biographies of great and good men, Nelson, that the most pious and learned have all passed through the same doubts and difficulties, that have made of some men infidels. The difference has been, I think, that the former have desired to find the truth, and have prayed humbly for enlightenment; whilst the latter have wished to find the Bible a lie, and have read it without hope or prayer, until they have believed what they wished. When we forget to pray, and to put our trust wholly in the Divine arm for guidance, it is all over with us."

"I believe you are right, Jessie. The temptations of the world draw us away from better things, and infidelity creeps into the heart; not that I am an unbeliever—God forbid!—only my faith has lost its vitality."

"Pray!" said Jessie, tears starting into her eyes in spite of her efforts to restrain them; "God's Holy Spirit alone can wash out the stains that we contract as we go through life."

"If I could wash the last six or eight months out of my life, there might be hope, but I have none now," said Nelson, with such a gravity and decision of manner as made Jessie shudder. But

one thing I will do, or rather you will do for me, reconcile me to my father."

"He is at Fairfield now," said Jessie.

"I think I would rather, if you would undertake it, Jessie, that you should first explain matters to him. If we enter upon the subject, he will at once get warm, and we shall quarrel; whereas, if we meet and shake hands as usual, and say nothing, all will blow over. Will you allow me to walk with you?"

Jessie looked her permission; and it was such a pleased, glad expression that lit up her face that it made Nelson sigh.

It was six or seven years ago when they last walked alone from the town to Fairfield. Then, almost boy and girl, they had been arm-in-arm, gravely talking of Nelson's future plans, and of many things beyond their years; now, man and woman, they walked side by side, but scarcely spoke; Nelson did not even offer his arm, and the old reserve seemed to have come upon him with the fresh air. Jessie longed to renew the subject that they had been talking of so lately, but her courage failed, when she perceived the gloom on Nelson's face. Once more the state of the atmosphere became the grand and engrossing topic; and you would have thought that those two human beings,

whose hearts were stirring with thoughts so deep and painful, that they could scarcely endure them alone, had no one idea in common, beyond the heat and the cold, the sunshine and shadow; except, perhaps, the little terrier, whose merits they discussed by fits and starts. Oh! what an untold multitude of hypocrites there are in this world!

As they got into the orchard, and drew near the pigeon-house, some of the pigeons, perceiving Jessie, flew towards her, and, as usual, perched upon her shoulders, and hovered about her head. The old sight recalled old times, and Nelson smiled, and said it was refreshing to come to Fairfield, and see everything so happy, and so much at home. The old smile encouraged Jessie, and she suddenly felt the weight rise from her heart, that had been pressing it down during their walk.

"I will go on first," she said, "and if you will come in five minutes, I am sure all will be right."

She did so, and at the bottom of the orchard met Captain Burford and Uncle James, who were coming to look after her. She soon gave the latter a commission to go and see an invalid cow, and then lost no time in telling the Captain simply, and in her own straightforward manner, what Nelson had said.

"Hang me, if I didn't think so!" shouted the

Captain. "Where is the boy? Good bye, Jessie; God bless you, little peace-maker! I must go and make up with him directly. He doesn't know that he called me a brute, and didn't mean it if he did. All's right then: I was sure of it in my own heart, but that cursed pride of mine, and of his through me, did the business. Good bye, my dear. Hurrah, boys! there he is, by Jove! Nelson, my dear boy! did you come on purpose? to be sure you did. There: let us shake hands and be father and son once more. I am sorry I was so thoughtless when you were unhappy; I know you didn't mean what you said: it was all my fault, and I was a proud, selfish old fool, thinking of nothing but my own wishes, and of——of——Jessie a little perhaps. But it is all over now. God bless you, Nel! I hope we shall all live to be happy yet. I am very sorry that I hurt your feelings,—confound the feelings! If we had no feelings, what steady-sailing crafts we should be!"

"My dear father," said Nelson, as soon as he had time to put in a word, "it is I who ought to be ashamed of myself, for allowing my feelings to get the better of my duty and love to you. I beg your pardon with all my heart, and hope nothing may ever again cause a coldness between us."

As Nelson pressed his father's hand and bent

over it, tears came into the eyes of the old man; to conceal which he gave his son a slap on the shoulder, and concluded with his favourite saying, "'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence."

"Where's Jessie? where's the little peace-maker?" he asked, after a short pause. "Flown, I declare! Come, Nel, let us follow her, and have one more happy rubber at dear old Fairfield, before you go to that confounded India. There never was anybody like Jessie, and never will be, that's a certain fact. She is as perfect as any one can be in an imperfect world."

The father and son walked arm-in-arm into the house, and they had one more happy evening at Fairfield. Uncle James was there, and Pynsent; and Captain Burford so managed matters as that he and Pynsent should be partners, and Uncle James and Aunt Betsey their opponents. Now, he was by no means a good manœuvrer, and Nelson and Jessie, as well as the rest of the party, saw through his *ruse* at once. Nelson was distressed for a moment; but Jessie, with that tact which in some would be hypocrisy, but was in her delicacy, soon put him at his ease. Seated as usual at her little work-table, making and mending unknown garments, she conversed with cheerfulness and good sense. Nelson sat near her, and, for the first time

since he left England, they had a *têté-à-tête* evening. He was led gradually to forget his griefs, and to talk with tolerable energy on such topics as Jessie began. She had read a great deal; and when she actually gave herself up to entertain another, could do so as well, or better, than many more learned and accomplished women. Her natural dignity gave one charm more to her simplicity of character; and Nelson found himself wondering where she could have gathered so much information, and the power of expressing it so well. Neither by word nor action did she allow him to suppose that he was more to her than the friend of her childhood; and as he was not a vain or conceited man, he was happy in believing that she, at least, was no sufferer by his late conduct. He knew well that his father had always been talking to her of him, and openly expressing his wishes concerning both; therefore he had feared that she might have given weight to such words. So Jessie was a hypocrite after all! How many such there are!

The evening came to a close, as such evenings always do; and one or two more similar ones had also a like end. Nelson and Jessie had fallen into a rather deep religious argument, in which not only her speech, but her heartfelt prayers were involved, and Nelson was the better for both. Al-

though quite as grave and cheerless as ever, and his thoughts quite as much wrapped up in his disappointment, he gave ear to Jessie, and was glad to be near her, and to talk to her. The last evening he again poured out some of his bitter feelings against Anna, and again hoped that he should soon be so engaged as to have an end put to a life that had lost all its charm. He chanced to look at Jessie as he spoke, and never afterwards forgot the expression of intense pain that settled on her countenance. He felt ashamed of himself for having been weak and unmanly enough to pour forth words that could have caused such an expression, and would have gladly recalled whatever could give a shadow of distress to one so good and gentle. Had he ventured again to look into her eyes when they parted that night, he might have been still more forcibly struck. The hard struggle to restrain the burst of grief that was waiting to accompany the tears that fell from her eyes worked unmistakably in her face, and moved her features with a strange agitation. But Nelson dared not look at her. He knew that he had been false at heart to one true as the loadstone, and that, whatever their respective positions, he had scarcely been consistent, even in his friendship. He could only press her hand firmly between both

of his, and say, "God bless you, Jessie! take care of my father." Had he seen her five minutes afterwards, giving way to her last weakness, in an agony of tears and prayers in her own room, alone and on her knees, he might perhaps have known what a treasure he had cast away from him, and have been grateful at least for so pure a love.

And thus Nelson departed for the second time for India, taking with him all his bitter feelings and heavy disappointments, and leaving behind him hearts that beat kindly and fondly for him, without selfishness or mistrust.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"How beautiful she look'd, as o'er her child
The youthful matron bent with tender care!
While the unconscious cherub's features smiled,
Reflecting back his mother's graces there:
How beautiful she look'd! how more than earthly fair!

"How more than beautiful doth beauty seem!
What holier garb can woman's graces wear!
Not Eve, when bending o'er her mirror stream,
In native innocence, could look more fair
Than the young matron looks, tending her infant care."

Nearly two years passed over quiet Fairfield unmarked by any very wonderful event. All novelties came to it in letters, and the postman occasionally brought Jessie such as roused or depressed her usually calm spirits, according to the nature of their contents. She heard at various times the histories of all dear to her, of whose happiness and well-doing she thought much more than of her own. Charles had gone to Italy to study, assisted thereto by his uncles, and bearing with him letters of introduction to men of talent, which were given him by patients and friends of Mr. Timothy Bar-

nard. Charles's communications from Italy were of high interest, and read, as may be supposed, with considerable pleasure by the little party at home. His soul was in his art, and he was truly labouring on to perfection, and finding encouragement and happiness. He once met Mr. Michelson in a gallery at Rome, where he was studying, and once in the studio of a friend. Mr. Michelson had glanced over his shoulder in the gallery at his painting, evidently without recognizing him, and had requested to be introduced to the promising young artist in the studio; but upon hearing his name, had without further remark bowed slightly, frowned considerably, and shortly after left the room. But Charles hoped to do well without patronage, and was not sorry to be free from all obligation to Mr. Michelson.

Then there arrived at Fairfield a rather brief letter from Louisa Colville, giving the intelligence of her intended marriage with a Colonel Marsden, a friend of her father's, whom she described as brave and kind, and likely, her parents told her, to make an excellent husband.

Pynsent's cynical remark on this news was—

"Did I not tell you that all pretty young ladies marry for the sake of marrying, or for rank, or money? Miss Colville was a pretty young lady,

with soft blue eyes, and of course she is doing the same. School-misses, and all misses, are alike."

"And why should not Louisa marry?" asked Jessie, feeling herself rather annoyed at her marrying a man who was, from her own account, old enough to be her father.

"I am sure I can have no objection," said Pynsent. "Anna is married; and I dare say, as Miss Colville is the eldest, it is high time for her to marry. She would have been quite *passé* in a year or two. Is that the approved word, Jessie? I am getting up my French."

Jessie fancied she perceived a vein of bitterness under Pynsent's raillery. If he had ever liked any one girl better than another, she was sure it was Louisa Colville; and, in spite of his determined mockery of all ladies below the sensible age of forty, she knew that he admired her.

But in due course of time her marriage was announced; and if Pynsent had ever thought seriously of her, he was obliged to forget her now, and stick more closely than ever to drugs and pill-boxes.

The letters from Nelson to his father were few, but affectionate. Brief and hurried, they usually spoke of active and imperative military duties, frequent engagements with the Natives, as precursors

of a decided war, and hopes that actual fighting was at hand. He always desired every kind remembrance to Jessie, little thinking of the anguish his letters, and their breathings after warfare, caused her. We must not forget to say that he was then gazetted Captain.

Anna's communications were the most satisfactory and amusing, for a long time at least. Descriptions of military men, military balls, military admiration, and military fascination, ran through them. She was evidently the idol of Chatham and of all his friends. More spoilt than ever, Jessie trembled for her. She entered with all her heart into the pleasures of the life into which she was cast, and Chatham seemed to rejoice in her success in society, as fervently as a mother when she introduces her eldest daughter. His scraps of notes were eloquent of the praises of his wife, and of the sensation she excited wherever she went. He declared he was growing jealous; but Jessie perceived, with thankfulness, that he was not jealous; she saw however with anxiety, that although their income was now very good, they must be already living beyond it. The presents they made lavishly to each other; those frequently sent to Jessie, against her earnest desire; Anna's dress; Chatham's stud; the constant balls and parties,—all combined

to rouse her fears, and to make her caution them both. They always took her cautions with the most perfect good-humour, but laughed at them, calling her their good, sensible, prudent little housekeeper.

It was with the greatest delight that Jessie heard of the birth of a son. If anything could make both parents thoughtful and steady, it would be this event. For a long time their letters were filled with accounts of this child, who seemed to engross every thought and desire of their hearts. By degrees, pleasure and diversion divided their attention with him, and it was again evident to Jessie that they were amusing themselves at the expense of prudence.

When they had been married about two years came the astounding intelligence that Chatham's regiment was ordered at once to India, and was to sail almost immediately. Anna's letter was so hasty and incoherent, and so full of the war in India, that little was to be gathered from it of their immediate plans, and Jessie was for some time in great anxiety about them, as they did not write very regularly.

One afternoon, as she was sitting alone with Pynsent, talking of them, and undergoing a lecture from him for what he called her needless fears,

a message was brought to her that she was wanted at the gate. To her surprise she saw a chaise and pair, and pausing with a nervous dread of strangers, meditated a retreat. The door opened however, and a lady descended, so she had no escape.

"Don't be frightened, Jessie, there is nothing the matter," in well-known, well-loved tones, and in another moment she was clasped in Anna's arms.

Before she had time to speak, Anna ran back to the carriage, and received something from within. This "something" she brought to Jessie, and held up with a tearful look of love and pride. It was her baby. Jessie took the child, and, as may be supposed, was soon smothering it with kisses. The nurse followed, and there was great commotion in the little court, inasmuch as the baby began to cry, and all were at once engaged in pacifying it. Pynsent might have been seen peeping through the window-blind, and wondering what it was all about. Anna did apparently catch sight of him, for, forgetful of old scores, she exclaimed, "Ah, Pynsent!" and ran into the hall where he was.

"I know you have forgiven me," she said, extending two hands, and a most beautiful, beseeching face to her brother.

He was not hard-hearted enough to resist it, but with an exclamation of surprise, "Anna, can

it be you?" clasped the offered hands, and kissed, warmly, the flushed cheeks. Instantly Anna was in the passage again, and snatching her baby from Jessie's arms, presented him to Pynsent.

"He is to be your godson, Pynsent. His name is Chatham Pynsent Michelson, and you are to be very fond of him."

As Pynsent took the baby rather awkwardly, Anna laughed and cried together.

"There is Aunty! and Uncle James! together! alone! they must marry after all!" she exclaimed, as two passers-by darkened the window.

She was in the court again, her arms round both alternately; and then she dragged them into the hall, to her baby. She insisted on Uncle James's holding, and Aunt Betsey's kissing him, a ceremony they performed even more awkwardly than Pynsent had done.

"Come in, Dinah! and Will!" she cried, as she saw the two servants peeping in at the door. "Come and see my baby;" and shaking hands with both, she again took the redoubtable Chatham Pynsent in her arms, and presented him in form. The smart nurse looked rather alarmed, as she saw her be-laced and be-cambricked charge dandled by old Will, whose large, brown, earth-covered hands were evidently better used to nursing

than those of any one else present; a fact proved by the instantaneous crowing and laughing of the infant.

It was pleasant to see the graceful, elegantly-dressed Anna, surrounded by that homely family group in the old-fashioned hall, showing off her beautiful baby. The young mother forgot everything else in her pride and happiness. She could answer no questions, make no inquiries, until every one had received and welcomed her baby; then taking him again in her own arms, and bursting into tears, she looked at Jessie, and said, as well as her sobs would let her—

"I have brought him to you, Jessie. I am going to India with my husband, and the doctors say the climate would kill the baby. You must take him, or he must go with us and die. I could not give him to any one else, and I must go with Chatham."

She looked, hesitatingly, round upon the assembled friends and relations, who were taken somewhat aback by this unexpected intelligence. All but Jessie and old Will hated babies, and they instantaneously felt what an encumbrance one would be at Fairfield. However Jessie put her arms round Anna and her child, kissed both tenderly, and said—

"We will settle this by-and-by. Baby and you are both too tired to discuss anything now, so come and take off your bonnet, and make yourself comfortable."

"My dear Anna," began Aunt Betsey, when they were all seated together after a late tea, "are you sure that you can bear the climate of India yourself? or is it right for a young woman to be going out at such a time?"

"I am quite decided upon that head, Aunty. Nothing should keep me in England whilst Chatham is in India. He has wasted a waggon-load of arguments upon me already, and we have quite quarrelled about it, but he has failed of convincing me. I am resolved to go with him, even if I must take baby with me."

"Headstrong as ever, Anna!" said Pynsent, looking with some degree of wonder at his beautiful sister; so self-possessed—so much a woman of the world already—so conscious of her own power—she seemed to know that no one could deny her anything.

"Perhaps more so," she replied, "because I have not my cross brother to put me out of conceit with myself, and to thwart me. Chatham is so kind, he spoils me. Oh! you should know how amiable he is! But what am I to do with my

baby? I have only a few days to stay, and we must settle about him. Chatham objected to my bringing him here because, he said, he knew you would none of you like it, and it would be an imposition. Then he wanted to write first, but I could not be happy until I had settled the matter, so I came straight, without any delay."

"It would be impossible for me to remain in a house where there was a baby," said Aunt Betsey; "it would quite disarrange all my habits and plans, and destroy every domestic comfort."

"Such a baby!" exclaimed Anna indignantly. "Your own grand-nephew! how cruel! I thought you would have welcomed a child of mine with delight."

Aunt Betsey did not quite like the idea of a "grand-nephew," as Anna called it: it sounded in her ears like a grandson.

"My dear!" said she statelily, "when one has not for years been accustomed to infants, it is impossible to reconcile oneself to the discomfort of them. I repeat, that I could not remain in the same house with one."

Pynsent inwardly applauded her taste, but wondered which would be the worst evil, Aunt Betsey or the baby.

"But Aunty," said Jessie, "I would take care

that you were not annoyed by the poor child. He seems a very good, quiet baby, and such a darling."

"I never saw a good, quiet baby yet, Jessie," said Aunt Betsey, "and I am sure, to judge from the noise I have already heard, Anna's is not an exception. Why my head aches from it, and I have been obliged to put cotton-wool in my ears, which is by no means agreeable."

"If you had asked me, I could have suggested something more effectual," said Pynsent.

"I suppose, then, I must take my baby with me, and let him run the chance of dying," said Anna, her face growing very red. "I thought you would all have taken him to your hearts for my sake, instead of rejecting him in this way."

"My dear, people should consider before they try to palm off their babies on others. I suppose there must be such things, but they are disagreeable necessities, and parents should keep them out of sight. Children begin to be endurable at five or six years old, not before."

"But you were fond of us, Aunty," said Jessie, "and always spoilt us. You doted on Anna as a baby."

"The case is different. You had no parents, and I was under the necessity of seeing to you: but pray do not argue the matter. Of course you can

keep the child, and I can procure another abode elsewhere."

Here Anna began to shed tears.

"There is but one course to take, that I can see," said Uncle James bluffly; "one or other of the parties had better come to the Grange. There are rooms enough for a dozen nursemaids and their babbies; but if that won't do, they are all at the service of Miss Burton."

"Rooms or nursemaids?" asked Pynsent.

"Rooms, Sir," replied Uncle James, blushing like a very full-blown rose, and looking very good-natured and handsome as he did so.

Aunt Betsey blushed also, and murmured the word "propriety."

Jessie looked at the pair with amazement; so did Anna through her tears. Pynsent bit his lip half through to keep from laughing.

"We could easy make it proper enough" (Uncle James was never quite clear about the distinction of adjectives and adverbs); "if Miss Betsey will take compassion upon the old Grange, there need be no difficulty about Anna's poor little baby."

Could it be, the nieces and nephew asked themselves, that Uncle James still had serious thoughts of Aunt Betsey? So unsuitable, so uncongenial, so seemingly incongruous a match? He

had never loved anybody else,—that they knew; but that at the respective ages of sixty and fifty, he should still preserve that love fresh enough to wish to marry her, appeared impossible. Yet so it was. Uncle James could find no fault in the woman he had been attached to all his life. He still looked upon her as the pattern of propriety, the pink of sense, and the rose of beauty. What Miss Betsey Burton had been more than thirty years ago, she was still to him; and to see her in state, knitting in the large parlour of the Grange, instead of in the small parlour at Fairfield; to have servants to wait upon her; and still to preserve her in her original condition of a lady of family, would have made him a happy man for life. That this had been always in his thoughts, nobody knew but himself; and that, since the one rebuff, he had never had courage to say it, nobody knew either. But this sudden climax in the family politics seemed to afford an opportunity for opening a window of his long-shut heart; and he did it boldly. He never could have ventured to do it alone with her; but there was safety and escape in numbers.

And Aunt Betsey! alas for human pride and human weakness! She had given up all hopes of Mr. Michelson, but she had still the old wish to be married. She had never taken kindly to old-maid-

ism. She had withered upon it: some people do, with wiser heads than Aunt Betsey's; more's the pity. She who had been such a toast, such a beauty! to die single after all! it was beyond the strength of woman to endure cheerfully; and she never had endured it cheerfully. Of late she had been civil to Uncle James, and had thought him a very fine man. She had considered also that the Grange was a nice old place, and might be made a country-seat of, and he a country gentleman, with a little management. It was not such a place as the Hall, certainly; but it was not so bad. And then, it might be better to be mistress there, than maiden aunt at Fairfield.

Such thoughts had of late been flitting through the mind of Uncle James and Aunt Betsey, and the present division of family interests tended to make them serious. Uncle James, having once broached the subject, was resolved to go through with it. He saw nothing ridiculous in the affair, and was not, indeed, very susceptible of ridicule himself. He knew how to give a joke and take one, and he did not care a whit whether his nephews and nieces laughed at him or not. So he continued the conversation, to the infinite delight of Pynsent, who inwardly wished him joy of Aunt Betsey, if he got her.

"You see, Ma'am," he said, addressing Aunt Betsey with all the features of his face except his eyes, "the poor babby must be cared for, and you don't take to it. I can't say that I like the noise of a babby myself; and if it comes to the Grange, I shall make the nursery as far off as I can. But I see no call for his coming to the Grange, if you will only do me the honour of coming yourself. It isn't a bad old place, and with your taste you might improve it and its master. What do you say, Nevy Pynsent?"

"I quite agree with you, Uncle," said Pynsent, coughing violently: Anna said afterwards she thought he would have broken a bloodvessel. "Aunt Betsey would do much more good at the Grange than Anna's baby."

"Pynsent! how foolish you are!" murmured Aunt Betsey over her knitting, which she was pertinaciously pursuing.

"Well, Ma'am, it remains for you to decide," said Uncle James with great modesty; "I know I am not deserving, but under the circumstances—"

"I must go and see a patient," broke in Pynsent. "Jessie, will you come and give me that—that small bottle of wine you promised? Anna, your baby is crying like a young bull."

Pynsent rose and beckoned his sisters, who rose also.

"Nevy, Nevy!" muttered Uncle James imploringly, pulling Pynsent's coat-tails. "Stay, Nevy Pynsent: no secrets amongst us, you know."

But Nevy Pynsent knew full well that whatever Uncle James might think, Aunt Betsey would not like a public proposal, but would require all the formalities and etiquette of courtship.

"I wish you success, Uncle!" said Pynsent, tapping him on the shoulder, and then, giving a tug to Anna's dress and Jessie's ringlets, he drew them out of the room.

After they were gone, there was a most awkward pause. Aunt Betsey knitted nervously, and felt several twitchings at her fingers' ends, but sat as stately as a queen, the black turban looking more imposing and grand than usual, as it surmounted the black hair.

"Miss Burton," at last suggested Uncle James.

"Sir!" replied Aunt Betsey.

Another pause.

"You understand my mind?" pursued Uncle James.

"Not precisely."

"Why, I have felt and meant the same all my life. You must know what I wish, Ma'am."

"Public communications take one by surprise, Mr. Barnard."

"Dang my buttons, private or public is all the same to me. I don't care who knows it!"

"Knows what?" gently inquired Aunt Betsey.

"Knows all, Ma'am: what you and I *knows*."

"I cannot say I quite understand you," said Aunt Betsey.

"Why, that I am ready and willing to marry you, whenever you like, if you will consent," blurted out Uncle James, with an effort so strong that he was compelled to take out his silk handkerchief and wipe his forehead.

There was no mistake now, so Aunt Betsey put down her knitting. She had still too much of the old leaven in her to make her devoted swain happy at once. "You do me much honour, I am sure, Mr. Barnard; but you take one by surprise. I cannot say I quite expected this."

"But you know it now, Ma'am, and must excuse my boldness. I would have said my say better if I could; but somehow it slipped from me unawares, and there's no recalling it now. 'Twas the babby that did it, and I hope I have not offended you."

"By no means, Sir; but the honour you intend me requires consideration. So serious a subject cannot be decided at once. I had not imagined that you still retained your old feelings."

"Never altered, Ma'am, upon my soul: I have grown grey upon 'em. I know I've been a fool,—ask your pardon, Miss Burton,—but you never used to care a rap for me, still I have never changed towards you."

Aunt Betsey was touched. She played with her eyeglass, and the old, old thought of Mr. Michelson came to her mind. She compared the conduct of the fine gentleman and the bluff farmer involuntarily, and silently acknowledged the superiority of the latter. In spite of all the ridicule that might be attached to it by the world, there was something sublime in a love that had lived through more than thirty years, without hope or encouragement, and that was willing at sixty to perform what it pined for at five-and-twenty. Aunt Betsey was old-maidish, vain, prim, proud, selfish, spoilt by early adulation, and imperious; but in the midst of this collection of faults and follies, there lay a heart, or the shrivelled remains of one, susceptible of some degree of warm feeling, which, if tended and nurtured, might still send forth its little flames. She was not worthy of Uncle James; but he thought her as superior to him as woman could be to man; and, after all, it is not what the world thinks, or even what actually exists, that makes the happiness of an individual,

but what he thinks or feels himself. Uncle James was content that, as his wife, Miss Betsey Burton should go on at the Grange just as he had seen her go on at Fairfield; if she improved, so much the better for him, but he needed no improvement.

So Aunt Betsey played with her eyeglass, and slightly blushed, and, without in the least descending from the dignity of her original deportment, she rose, and making a kind of obeisance, extended three fingers of her still very white hand to Uncle James, which that excellent man seized between both of his very brown ones, and devoutly kissed. As a gentleman of the old school, he performed the other part of the ceremony of proposal fashionable in his day. He fell down on one knee, with which act of adoration Miss Betsey was particularly pleased, she having conceived her notions of such matters from Richardson's heroes and heroines, who always enacted similar scenes with due propriety.

There was a falling off when it came to the "getting up" part of the act. When Aunt Betsey murmured, "Pray rise, Mr. Barnard," and would have assisted her knight so to do, she found that, physically as well as morally, "it is easier to fall than to rise again." She did not, like the fair

dame who brought the *great* historian Gibbon to his knees, ring the bell for the servant to help him up, but she delicately pushed a chair towards him, which, however, he gallantly disdained. Resting his hand on his bended knee, he slowly drew up the extended foot, and with one mighty effort, and a long-drawn breath, he at last managed to get clear of the matting.

"Haw! haw! haw!" he exploded, when he was fairly on his feet. "I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but, after all, there's no fool so great as an old fool. First time and last, James, my boy, isn't it?"

Aunt Betsey frowned, and Uncle James looked alarmed.

"May I hope, Miss Burton, that my offer is or will be accepted?" he said with becoming gravity.

"Sir, I must somewhat more maturely consider the subject before I give my final answer. This much I may venture to say, my feelings have undergone a change towards you, and that of a favourable nature."

Uncle James, in ecstasies, seized the yielding hand, and would have been on his knees again, but for a sudden twinge in his foot, which forewarned him of gout.

"May I call in Nevy Pynsent and our nieces?" he asks.

"My mind is too much fluttered to admit of that at present," said Aunt Betsey. "If you will excuse me, I will retire for a time, and collect my scattered ideas."

"Certainly, my dear,—hem! certainly, Ma'am," said Uncle James, pausing on the former epithet, lest it should be premature, and palliating it with the second.

Aunt Betsey deigned a smile however, and once more offering her hand, swept out of the room.

"Nevy! Nevy Pynsent! Jessie! Anna!" called Uncle James in the passage, and the three apostrophized individuals appeared from the parlour, Jessie carrying the baby asleep in her arms.

"You may keep the babby here; make yourself easy, Anna. You're going to lose Aunt Betsey, Nevy."

"Thank goodness!" said Pynsent. "I mean, my dear Uncle, on your account; you will be the gainer, we the losers. I congratulate you."

"I am the proudest man in the world this day, my dear children. What I have been living for these thirty years,—what has often saved me from drink and other misbecoming things, in the prospect, has now become certain: I shall be happy at last."

"God grant it, my best Uncle," said Jessie,

kissing the beaming face of the happy man, and feeling no doubt that he would be all the happier, and perhaps all the better, for marrying his first and only love, even though she was as little suited to him as could be.

"Uncle, do you know what Dr. Johnson says?" asked Pynsent.

"No: what, you scamp?"

"That if marriages were made by the Lord Chancellor, instead of in Heaven, as is supposed, there would be quite as many happy matches. Where do you think yours was made?"

"Begun at Fairfield, and ended, I hope, at the parish church, my boy. The sooner you follow my example the better: it is no good wasting one's best years if one can help it, is it, Anna?"

"No indeed, Uncle; I am for marrying as soon as possible," said Anna, stooping to kiss her baby, "and I think it is never too late to do a good thing."

"You minx! You mean to insinuate that it is late for me."

"Oh, never *too* late, I said, Uncle. I wish I could be at the wedding. Chatham is coming to fetch me, and we are to christen baby, and then—and then! Oh, Jessie! give him to me, the dear darling. How can I part with him,—how can I leave him, even to you?"

"A christening and a wedding!" exclaimed Pynsent. "I shall fly the country! And then a baby, 'muling and puking!' I will give it a dose, Anna, and settle its accounts. Verdict, 'Died by the visitation of God,' 'Unknown cause,' 'Arsenic administered in pap.' Now call the bride elect, and let us have some supper. Uncle, you can't eat, I suppose?"

"Never felt so hungry in my life!" said Uncle James.

"Three cheers for the young couple,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" shouted Pynsent, and with lungs innocent of consumption, he went to call Aunt Betsey.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Where is it mothers learn their love?
In every church a fountain springs,
O'er which th' eternal Dove
Hovers on softest wings.

"What sparkles in that lucid flood
Is water by gross mortals eyed;
But, seen by Faith, 'tis blood
Out of a dear Friend's side."—KEBLE.

It was the good and salutary custom in the parish church to which Fairfield belonged, to baptize children on the Sunday, during Divine Service. The Burtons had always been strict Church-people, and Jessie inherited, even more than the rest of the family, that spirit which, without tending to superstitious observance of rites and ceremonies, made her tenacious of giving due honour to all she had learnt to love and reverence. It was therefore her particular request that her little nephew should be publicly brought into Christ's Church on the day set apart for His service, and in the presence of His family. She argued that the

prayers of the congregation, joining with those of the infant's relations, and ascending together to Heaven, were equally beneficial to all, not only bringing down their blessing on the babe, but on those who join in the ceremony; and, in the words of the Rubric, causing that "every man present be put in remembrance of his own profession, made to God in his baptism." When her brother-in-law, Chatham, said that it was an old fashion, and quite in disuse at the present day, she replied, "Old fashions were often founded on right reason and religious principle, and assuredly all the rules laid down in the Book of Common Prayer were for the furtherance of Christian unity, and brotherly love and charity." Pynsent quite agreed with his sister; and as they were to be godfather and godmother, Uncle Timothy being the other sponsor—for whom Uncle James acted as proxy—Chatham and Anna let them have it as they would.

Accordingly, on a delicious morning in May the whole family set out for church, some in the car, and some walking across the fields. Baby, in the most magnificent of robes, caps, hats, and cloaks, was in the best of humours, and certainly looked a child of whom any mother might be proud. He, with his nurse, Aunt Betsey, and Uncle James, went inside the car which Chatham drove. Anna

had a fancy to walk once more across those dear old fields with Jessie and Pynsent before she went away to that far foreign country, where the beautiful spring flowers and breezes of exhilirating May would exist for her but in memory. Half-gay, half-sad, she hunted amongst the furze bushes as she went on, for the white and blue violets that scented their paths, but hid themselves from their eyes; or she paused in the rich green meadows to gather the full, luscious cowslips, of which she had made the huge tisty-tosty in her childhood; or plucked the pale, faint blossom of the cuckoo-flower, that seemed, to her, to be the type of infancy. Volatile as the birds, and even more changing in her moods, she almost flew from one well-remembered spot to another, pointing out to her brother and sister each field or tree or brook that had been their favourite haunts all their lives, and recalling some scene connected with them. From an outbreak of enjoyment she would suddenly relapse into momentary sadness, and the tears would start into her eyes when she thought of the speedy parting, and above all, of her darling child. Jessie, less excited, but not less touched by the prospect of separation, and the doubtful lot of her beautiful sister, tried to draw her mind to think of the solemn ceremony they were so soon to go

through. But Anna's heart was in the past and future; and whilst the flowers, the birds, the brooklet, the very rejoicing sunshine, recalled the happy days of her childhood, the loving words and looks of Jessie, and the kind, manly tones of Pynsent, made her think of the time when she should be far from them, following her husband, perhaps to a soldier's grave. Never had those distant church bells sounded so sadly-sweet to the soul of Anna; never before had the rejoicing cry of the cuckoo sent such a painful thrill through her heart. Should she ever hear them again? Should she ever again tread those fields to go to the House of God?

"Jessie," she said, when she at last settled into a more sober walk, leaning on her brother's arm, "will you, when I am far away, try to think as little as possible of my faults, and as much as you can of my good qualities, if I have any?"

"My dearest Anna," said Jessie, "I scarcely know whether you have bad qualities or not; if you have, love is so blind that I cannot see them; at least," she added, with her characteristic adherence to truth, "if I see them they soon fade away from before me, and I forget them."

"And will you forgive me all the trouble and grief I have caused you during our whole lives?

It seems to come before me, at this moment, in a great mass, as if, when I am parted from you, the remembrance of it would never leave me. There is something depressing in the joy and beauty of nature when the heart is sad. Will you forgive me?"

"My darling Anna, I have nothing to forgive: I can only love you."

"Oh yes! yes! You have had much to forgive; always—all my life. And you, Pynsent? Will you forgive me? wholly, from your heart? I know I have always tried to tease and annoy you, but it was not from real wickedness or want of affection, only mischief. I have courage to say it now, for the first time; the prospect of parting makes one feel so strange. Will you forgive all I have ever done to offend you?"

"Let me see!" said Pynsent, trying to laugh off Anna's sadness, "can I forgive all the pill-boxes filled with little bread pills; the medicine-bottles with coloured water; the dusters pinned to my coat-tails; the anonymous letters from imaginary patients; the pert speeches on my old-fashioned appearance; the hints at my cross temper; the proud looks when I would not admire the little beauty; the sly pinches and tugs at my hair and nose; all the impertinences of my younger sister?

How can you have the conscience to ask me, Anna?"

"But my graver faults, Pynsent? I cannot jest today; tomorrow we shall part."

"Not so, Anna; for I mean to see you off. It is my turn to take a holiday now. Jessie has had hers, and I will not be cheated."

"My dear brother!" said Anna, putting her hand in Pynsent's, "how very, very kind! Chatham will feel this, I know. You cannot tell how much he needs a real friend in many ways. He has such very acute feelings, that he blames himself for everything, whereas I am quite as much to blame."

"What do you mean, Anna?" said Jessie.

"Oh, nothing serious; only we are rather in debt, and shall have no time to get out of it. I know it was very wrong, but we did it to please one another, and to make our friends happy. Do not shake your head, Pynsent; if you will only advise Chatham, I am sure he can manage. Get him to sell his dogs and horses before we go away, and to arrange so as to start fair, and I promise to keep clear again, and so will he. Our great trouble is, lest it should come to the ears of the Countess; we would rather do anything than offend or annoy her. Chatham must manage to

run down and see her before we leave. I declare! there he is, and I have been crying: if he sees me with red eyes, he will think you have been lecturing me."

"The bells have stopped, baby is housed at the Vicarage, Aunt and Uncle have gone into church, and I have come to look after the lost sheep," said Chatham, advancing. "What's the matter, Anna?" he added, casting rather an angry look at Pynsent, whom he regarded somewhat in the light of a bear.

"I have been sentimentalizing over these old fields and flowers, and fifty things, that is all," said Anna, taking her husband's arm, and proceeding in advance of the others.

"Does my Anna regret?" said Chatham, always jealous to absurdity of Anna's love.

Anna pressed his arm, and looked at him, smiling through her tears. He was satisfied, and they quickened their steps.

The service had begun when they entered the church, and the congregation were on their knees. In the hurry of their entry into their pew, Chatham and Anna had placed themselves directly opposite the Michelson seat. When they first saw the red curtains they felt uneasy, but when, within the red curtains, they perceived Mr. Michelson in

person, they felt a shock that nearly sent them on their knees again. The father's eyes literally met those of the son and daughter-in-law, neither party being aware that the other was in the neighbourhood. That all three speedily looked upon their prayer-books, may be readily imagined: that Chatham and Anna never looked off them, may be also understood: but that Mr. Michelson placed himself behind the curtains, so as to command the pew opposite with his ill-omened eyes, and used them and his glass to good or evil purpose, need be told. He had arrived at the Hall the night before, as usual, unexpected by his servants, and as usual, had gone to church. He was a man who always kept up the outward proprieties of life, and was very strict in his notions concerning the necessity of being seen behind the red curtains once a week, book and eyeglass in hand. He was looking ill. His cheeks had lost a trifle of their roundness and colour, and his eyes a symptom of their bold brightness. His hair was a shade less glossy, and in a certain spot on the crown of his head, was brushed out of its usual course, in order to conceal the beginning of a small bald patch.

The sudden appearance of the great man disturbed the devotions of the inmates of the Fairfield pew not a little, and the nurse and baby actu-

ally entered the church unperceived by them, and were at the pew-door before even Anna remembered that they ought to be expecting them towards the close of the second lesson.

The sight of the child however diverted their thoughts from his Grandpapa: grand, in every sense of the word. He was asleep, and looked as lovely as any sleeping infant ever looked: and nothing earthly is more lovely than a sleeping infant.

The font stood very nearly central between the two pews, so that Mr. Michelson, willingly or unwillingly, was compelled to hear and see the whole baptismal rite. Through the aperture in the curtain he watched all the proceedings, and although he offered no prayer, and made no response with those of the assembled congregation; bent not the knee, and raised not the body from the seat, as if in token of disapprobation and disgust; still the holy service, the kneeling forms around the font, and the beautiful babe, entered, like iron, into his soul.

He was awhile forgotten by those whose fate, in spite of himself, was entwined in his own, but he could not forget them. He saw even the tear that trembled in Anna's eye, as the solemn service was read that made her sweet babe a Christian. He saw that babe awake from his sleep, and looking

round him with wondering eyes, at last recognize and smile at his father. He watched the kneeling forms of those who prayed that the child might "be born again, and become an heir of salvation," and heard them promise in his name "to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh." He listened to the supplications of the priest, joined in and responded to by all the congregation but himself, for the eternal welfare and present regeneration of his own grandchild; and saw him taken into the arms of that priest, and signed with the "sign of the cross," in token that in after-life he should not be "ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified." The name "Pynsent Chatham Burton Michelson" had also sounded in his ears, and seemed to remain engraved upon his mind. This combination grated harshly upon him. Finally he heard the exhortation given to the parents, godfathers and godmothers, to see "that the infant be taught, so soon as he should be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he had made," "remembering always, that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him."

Could he hear and see all this untouched? God,

who seeth the heart, alone can tell. He knew that the child and his parents belonged to him, and that he had renounced them all. He felt, when he looked at them, that he was a lonely man, without one real blessing to make life happy. He was conscious of a something beautiful, holy, and soothing in the kneeling forms of the young father and mother, and loving relatives; the innocent, helpless infant; the simple, heavenly service. When it was all over, and the congregation still remained on their knees to offer one short, silent prayer, each in his own words, for the good of the young immortal, just admitted into Christ's Church, he bent his head in his hand. Perhaps he, too, prayed. Perhaps the proud, cold, impalpable nature was momentarily softened, and he may have asked for a blessing on his innocent grandchild. Perhaps the first stone is laid for building up, hereafter, the faith of Christ in his own soul. Who shall say? Strange and imperceptible are the workings of the Spirit of God.

Poor Anna was quite overcome when she returned to the seat. The low sob might have been heard, as she thought of her speedy separation from the babe whose spiritual state she seemed never to have considered until that day. Mr. Michelson, who was standing according to his cus-

tom whilst the Litany was read, was attracted by the sound to look into the pew through the red curtain, and again saw Chatham and Anna, kneeling side by side, the manly arm thrown for a moment round the waist of the agitated wife, as if to assure her of comfort and support. Mr. Michelson sat down, and from that moment kept his eyes turned to his Prayer-book.

When the service was concluded, he hastily left the church, evidently to avoid being brought into contact with those connected with him. As he walked on through the churchyard, he did not return quite as majestically as usual the bows and curtseys that awaited him, but with downcast eyes trod the path that led to the Hall. The nurse and his little grandchild were coming to meet the parents; and the child was crowing and making various infantine noises. The nurse had seen the grand gentleman in the grand pew with the red curtains, looking, with apparent interest, at the christening through the aperture afore-mentioned. She did not know who he was, but had no doubt that he must be a friend of her master and mistress. She curtseyed and smiled blandly, and seeing him about to pass her with averted eyes, held the baby up to be looked at, as much as to say, "How can you pass such a beautiful child unno-

ticed?" The unconscious infant crowed, and half stretched out his little hands. Mr. Michelson was quite taken by surprise. He felt impelled to pause a moment and look at his grandson. The full dark eyes of Anna flashed upon him in the babe. Perhaps there was a hidden spring of tenderness somewhere in his heart, for he always felt an inclination for children: we have already seen this more than once. He could not resist the outstretched arms. He patted the cheek of the lovely boy, and was going on, when the little hand caught, unconsciously, hold of his finger. This was irresistible. How could any one, with the thousandth part of a heart, refuse such an appeal? He hemmed and fidgeted, and gently disengaged his finger, and again patted the dear, soft cheek. A momentary tenderness stole into his bold blue eye. His hand crept into his pocket, and drew out a sovereign, which he gave the nurse. "Do not name this on any account; do not say that I have seen the child," he said, and passed on.

Of course, the nurse, as soon as she met her mistress, gave an exaggerated account of the meeting, and Anna told it to Chatham, and they were both so moved by it, that they resolved to write a farewell letter to their father. But Uncle James heard, in the course of the evening, that he had

again taken his departure; which appeared so decided a hint that he meant to have nothing to say to them, that they deferred the letter to some more convenient season.

They were obliged to leave Fairfield themselves the following morning. Hasty arrangements were made concerning the baby. Poor Jessie received him, reluctantly, it must be confessed, he was such a charge and responsibility. Chatham was to order his agents in town to pay her fifty pounds a year for his maintenance, and that of a nurse. She would not hear of more, at present, though their ideas were magnificent, as usual, and willed her a hundred and fifty.

The parting was dreadful. This was, perhaps, Anna's first real sorrow, and she gave way to the excess of her maternal feelings unrestrainedly. It was more than her friends could bear to see her all that morning with her child; now giving him into the arms of Jessie, and conjuring her to be a mother to him; now casting her own arms round both, and pressing hot kisses and hotter tears upon their lips alternately; then turning to Chatham and assuring him that she would follow him to the world's end, but that a mother's feelings were so strong—so strong! Again on her knees before his little cradle when he slept, her arms cast over it,

her eyes fixed on his cherub face, her heart beating quick, quick, with her efforts to restrain the sobs that she knew might wake him. And then the babe's unconsciousness; that soft, regular breathing—those laughing lips—the tight little hand clasped round the finger on which was her wedding ring! She felt that her heart must break. And Chatham stood over the mother and child, scarcely less affected. He covered his eyes with his hand to hide the full, large tears that were swelling in them, and leaning on the head of the cradle sobbed with his wife. Their first-born! Was this the anguish of parting with a child? What must be that of losing one? Not greater, they felt assured; they thought they could not suffer more, and live. Gently Anna untied the little cap-string—softly, tenderly, she uplifted the silky hair—breathlessly she cut off two glossy, tiny tresses. She kissed the hair; she kissed the little hand; she breathed kisses and prayers over the sweet smiling face; and knowing that her sobs must either have vent or break her heart, she rose, and in her husband's arms poured out, as it were, her very soul in tears. God knows that a mother's love is stronger than all other love!

Poor Anna! She had looked forward with some pleasure, and the utmost curiosity and excitement.

to going to India. It had been one of the inducements to her engaging herself to Nelson; but now the actual event was about to take place, how changed everything seemed. She had not realized the fact that all the admiration, all the gaiety, all the splendour that either the east or west can give us, cannot compensate for the one great agony of parting for years from those dearest to us. She did not know that it is better to live in quiet and comparative poverty with those who love us, than to dwell in luxury with those who merely admire us, or court us for some extraneous good. She now felt the love of a mother at her heart. What was the flattery of the world to this? She felt the true, tender, deep affection of a sister working within her, never so true, so tender, or so deep before. What was a life of pleasure without this? What if sorrow or sickness, or death should go with her, or find her in a foreign land! What if her husband should be killed in battle! It would be all over then with the allurements of pleasure, and she would be far away from home, friends, and all that loved her. When she clasped Jessie in her arms for the last time, and saw her turn away with her hands covering her eyes, and her frame convulsed with sobs, she knew that no new ties could ever wind around her heart, and draw it as those

old ones did. What was India, what was the whole world, at that moment? Sister, almost mother—they might never meet again.

Oh, it seems a strange, hard, unnatural world, and a still more unnatural state of society, when hearts almost break at partings such as these! God forgive those who cause "wars and rumours of wars," for surely if the whole amount of agony they occasion could be gathered into one vast heap, it would overset the world.

Pynsent helped his brother-in-law to arrange his affairs, and between them they succeeded in placing them tolerably straight. The sale of carriages, hunters, and dogs, enabled them to pay off most of the debts; and the pay just received defrayed the rest, and bought the proper outfit. True, they left England poor, or would have done so, had not Uncle Timothy presented Anna with a bank-note of a hundred pounds, which he had just received from a rich and grateful patient.

Chatham and Anna both managed to visit Plas Ayron for a couple of days, and to take their last farewell of the venerable Countess. They never saw her again. They were enabled to renew their thanks, so often expressed by letter, for the happiness she had caused them; and she had the gratification of believing that she had really made them

happy. They confessed to her that they had been extravagant, but assured her that it was for the first and last time in their lives, and that they had never forgotten or wholly disregarded her advice and wishes. She believed them, and in her love for them, and theirs for her, was repaid for all she had done. Her memory often kept them in after life from folly; and faulty as they too frequently were, they never wholly forgot her advice, or the generous means she had employed to make them good and happy. The Lady Georgiana and her children were equally glad to see them, and sorry to bid them farewell.

Uncle Timothy and Pynsent saw them embark for India. The parting was a very sad one, though all tried hard to be courageous. Pynsent felt for the first time how well he really loved this spoilt, pet sister; and whilst watching the vessel glide smoothly over the ocean on her outward course, he forgot all her little vanities, capricious moods, and tantalizing ways, and only remembered that he had never loved her as he ought. Many undeserved, and some deserved self-reproaches assailed him, as he wished he had been a tenderer brother, and a more willing aider of Jessie in her efforts to direct that wayward heart. But the past was past, and he could only hope and pray for the future.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Oh, fie upon this single life! forego it.
We read how Daphne, for her peevish flight,
Became a fruitless bay-tree: Syrinx turn'd
To the pale empty reed: Anaxarete
Was frozen into marble: whereas those
Which married, or proved kind unto their friends,
Were, by a gracious influence, transshaped
Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry;
Became flowers, precious stones, or eminent stars."

JOHN WEBSTER.

THE next important event at Fairfield was the marriage of Uncle James and Aunt Betsey. As may be supposed, it excited much mirth in the neighbourhood; but the gentleman was too happy, and the lady too proud, to care for what people said about them. In their own family the case was different. Many were the opinions broached, and when Uncle Timothy wrote to Jessie upon the subject, and poured out his disapprobation, she was compelled to suppress the letter, and in her reply to entreat him to write to Uncle James kindly and considerately.

Aunt Betsey was resolved to have everything in proper style, and arranged with such a degree of state as befitted the Burton family. Accordingly a suitable *trousseau* was provided, and the friends on both sides, who were indeed mutual friends, invited to the wedding. The Grange was furbished and furnished, by Jessie's directions, into a highly respectable family mansion, and she was desired to spare no expense. Uncle James himself suddenly returned to his boyhood. It was delicious to see him jump with resolute agility over stiles that he had climbed with some difficulty a few months back, in order to assist the dignified and graceful Miss Betsey, magnificent in silks and feathers; to watch him stoop to pick up her handkerchief, play with her knitting-cotton, blush when he inadvertently touched her hand, rush about with plates of toast and cake, to the delight of Pynsent, who had a decided objection to the task, and finally laugh at himself with one of his hilarious "Haw! haw! haws!" when he suddenly remembered that he might be making a fool of himself. It would have been ridiculous, had it not been the result of feelings so pure, and a love so constant and enduring, to see him present the loveliest rose, with the half-bursting bud, to the object of his adoration. It was ridiculous—no, not quite ridiculous, because

Aunt Betsey was always dignified—but peculiar, to mark the reception of the gift. Aunt Betsey would bend over it, and with a dainty finger and thumb place it in her bosom *en princesse*. She was really beginning to feel a few sparks of the tender passion, and thought that if her lover was a little less loud, and adhered more strictly to the rules of grammar, he would be quite gentleman-like, as he undoubtedly was handsome.

Upon Jessie, as usual, fell all the labour,—the making of cakes and tarts, the arrangement of the house, the consultations about the dresses, and, above all, the keeping in order of Captain Burford and Pynsent. Oh the entreating glances, the powerful private lecturings, she expended in vain upon those incorrigible tricksters! Every good joke was brought to bear upon poor Uncle James, who, to do him justice, took it very good-humouredly; but Aunt Betsey resented every insult with a calm dignity that became her.

"Uncle," said Pynsent one day, when the lover had been in attendance, and seemed in a fluster of excitement upon the approaching event, "how do *you* feel in your present condition?"

"Very comfortable, Sir, and I advise you to cultivate the same," was the reply.

"Then it does not make you ill, as it does some people?"

"Never better in my life, boy; I am quite young again. Haw! haw!"

"Do you know this morning Giles Miller sent for me?" began Pynsent.

"Pynsent," interrupted Jessie, "come here a moment."

"Let's have Giles Miller first," said the Captain. "He is going to be married, is he not?"

"There is the extraordinary part of the affair! Excuse me, Aunt Betsey. He called me in as I passed, and said he felt strange sensations. Do you feel strange sensations, Uncle?"

"There's a strange sensation for you, Nevy!" said Uncle James, giving him a heavy slap on the back with his broad palm.

"You have no feeling, Uncle," said Pynsent, shrinking. "'Well, Giles,' said I, 'you are in love, and you must describe your sensations accurately, as they are in no medical book that I am acquainted with: where is the seat of it?' 'I feel it working here like barm, Sir!' exclaimed Giles, striking his left side with his hand, and looking very much moved. I considered gravely, as in duty bound; then advised him to swallow a bushel of flour, sit quietly by the fire till it was leavened, then run about a long time to work it into bread, and finally, get into the oven and bake

it. 'If that doesn't calm your sensations, Giles,' I added, 'I know not what will.'"

"Haw! haw! haw!" shouted Uncle James. "Not a bad description, is it, Ma'am?" turning to Aunt Betsey; "I swear I have felt like barm in me a thousand times."

Between jests and gibes, the time before the marriage fled on. Uncle Timothy, somewhat mollified by Jessie, came down to give the youthful bride away, and Jessie was bridesmaid. Uncle Timothy was the most untractable of the party. He was very susceptible of ridicule, as old bachelors occasionally are, and could not get over the absurdity of the match. He would have been better satisfied had Aunt Betsey been more suitable, but he had frequent occasion to look through his favourite Epistle to his namesake Timothy, which he always considered as particularly addressed to himself, to find texts upon patience and forbearance. His conscience pricked him when he came to the words "forbidding to marry;" and, addressing an imaginary bookshelf, as he walked up and down his bedroom at Fairfield, he accused himself thus: "Timothy! Timothy! perhaps thou art one of those 'seducing spirits' who 'forbid to marry;' perhaps also thou dost indulge in 'vain babblings:' thou must not go against nature, so

Timothy;" and so he tried to reconcile himself to having Aunt Betsey for a sister-in-law. To show that he wished her well, he made her a present of a handsome gold watch and chain, which glittered conspicuously on the wedding morning over the silver grey satin dress. Aunt Betsey's attire was highly becoming, being neither too juvenile nor too antique for her years and the occasion. She certainly looked a splendid woman in the white bonnet and ostrich feather, and Uncle James was very proud of her.

It all went off very well. It was cheering to hear the hearty voice of Uncle James, as he pronounced the words after the clergyman, as resolutely as if he had been talking to his huntsman, and said the "I will" so loud, that it resounded through the church, and made Jessie start. Aunt Betsey was becomingly nervous and modest; shed a few tears, trembled, and blushed; but, on the whole, behaved with her customary dignity.

When all was over, and the happy couple and Uncle Timothy had started for London, where, be it said, neither bride nor bridegroom had been before, Pynsent and Jessie settled themselves down as bachelor and old-maid brother and sister, with feelings of very decided contentment. They considered that they were beginning the life they had

planned for themselves years ago, in good earnest, only a little earlier than they intended. They had both made up their minds never to marry, and that with more intention of keeping their resolution, than most people of seven or eight-and-twenty have when they make such a one. They were devotedly attached to one another, and always peaceable and happy together, and although Pynsent was not reconciled to his country practice, which he followed against the grain, still he tried to make the best of it. He had too generous a heart to accumulate a fortune; for he could not press for money, or indeed take it, from the greater proportion of his patients, and his principal practice was amongst the poor. Day and night he laboured in his profession, and laboured willingly, for he liked it; but he could not bear the vulgar ignorance he met with, and sometimes longed for a wider sphere, both for his talents and philanthropy.

He had, unfortunately, work at home as well as abroad, for Anna's baby proved, as the London doctors had predicted, a sickly child, and occasioned both him and Jessie great anxiety. Many sleepless and prayerful nights did they pass with the poor suffering infant, whilst his parents were on the wide ocean, unconscious of his state, save

by sympathy, which doubtless drew Anna's heart to her baby at such times. But they nursed and doctored him through the various diseases of infancy, all of which he seemed to have worse than any child that was ever born before: teething, whooping-cough, measles, scarlatina, and all the ills to which babyhood is heir, attacked him during the first two years of his existence, and the worst of the matter was, that he would endure no nurse but Jessie. He was a child of good taste, for any one who had once been nursed by her during illness, would have put up but ill with anybody else. She waxed thin and pale upon her unusual watchings; for, although always well occupied, she had been accustomed to regular hours and regular sleep. However, in due course of time, both she and Pynsent were amply repaid for their trouble, in seeing their little nephew grow up a fine, strong child, the delight and admiration of everybody. As Jessie had him all to herself, she brought him up judiciously, and resolutely abstained from spoiling him. Self-will and pride he inherited from both parents, and Jessie did her best, by taking those ill weeds in the bud, to root them out. Of course he loved her and Pynsent as if they were his parents, and took to calling Jessie "Mammy" in spite of all her exertions to make him say Aunty;

and in vain she tried to impress upon him that he had a mother and father far away beyond the seas, and that he must love them best. He consented to place them second in his affections, and to call them his "far-away" mamma and papa; but he could not, naturally, care much about them. Jessie felt this to be the great evil of going to India, and knew that Providence had ordered well for her, in keeping her at home.

Thus more years passed on; quietly at home, uneasily abroad. "Wars and rumours of wars" in India kept the pair of country mice in continual anxiety; and the birth and death of two babies made Anna's letters sad to receive and read. We have not time to comment on all the young mother's misery, and its outpourings to her sister; but God was working his way to her soul through chastisement. Chatham too was continually engaged in active service, and poor Anna, following him as near and as well as she could, had found India anything but the paradise she had expected.

One great and supreme pleasure had cheered Jessie during this period: she had had one or two good and friendly letters from Nelson. Captain Burford thought them precursors of future happiness. Jessie saw in them, and knew that they contained nothing more than, the words of a

friend who esteemed her, and professed himself benefited by her advice. Nelson appeared to be carrying out his resolution of making glory his mistress. Not from himself, but from the Indian journals, they learnt his exploits. Wherever danger was greatest and battle fiercest, he was sure to be found, and promotion was rapid accordingly. He obtained his captaincy for his conduct on a very dangerous expedition against the natives, into the interior of India, when he was the first to scale a fort, and to lead his men, but few in number, on to victory. Jessie's greatest delight, when the news reached her, was that by his forbearance and gallantry he had induced the unhappy natives to capitulate, and was honourably mentioned for his lenity. She could never understand what right any nation had, whether Christian or heathen, to make inroads into the countries of peaceful people, for the mere desire of conquest, and looked upon glorious England not unfrequently as a marauder or freebooter, because she had borne her victorious arms into places where she had no natural right to enter. Why Jessie should increase her already superabundant stock of avocations by the study of languages, her brother Pynsent was at a loss to know; but at every spare moment she might have been seen, ever since Aunt Betsey's marriage, with

the French and Italian dictionaries and grammars before her, which Anna had left behind when she went to India. Jessie knew something of the Latin grammar from hearing Pynsent and Charles their lessons, and she found her knowledge of considerable use to her in her learned attempts. The truth was that Jessie, in spite of farming and housekeeping, and her little nephew, felt a void in her heart, that made her sad when she was left to her own thoughts. She had heard that nothing was so good as study to withdraw the mind from itself, and accordingly she began in good earnest. When she was at work of an evening, she would have a vocabulary or grammar before her eyes, and resolutely insert the words and sense into her mind, which effectually kept out regrets and wishes that she knew were useless. In time Pynsent took an interest in her pursuit, and having picked up a little French at school, and a good accent from a French master, assisted her, and improved himself. She had learnt to pronounce Italian from Anna during her holidays, merely for the pleasure that the sound of the language gave her, her ear being peculiarly alive to sweet sounds; and thus was enabled to make a progress that would have surprised many who had been puzzling over the languages as children at school, without much interest

in the pursuit. The little music also that she had picked up during her very desultory education, was carefully reproduced, and now and then she tried the old piano, and, partly by ear, partly by note, managed to accompany herself in singing. She would laugh heartily when she suddenly recollected that she was verging upon thirty years of age when she began her studies; nevertheless she persevered, and banished many an unhappy thought by so doing.

END OF VOLUME II.

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